RIVER SUPREME

ALICE TISDALE HOBART

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River
Supreme

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Alice Tisdale Hobart

Author of
Oil for the Lamps of China

THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS INDIANAPOLIS

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Printed in the United States of America
Originally copyrighted in 1929 under the title *Pidgin Cargo*

PRINTED AND BOUND BY
BRAUNWORTH & CO., INC.
BOOK MANUFACTURERS
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

DEDICATED

TO

MY SISTER

MARY NOURSE

WHO FIRST SHOWED ME THE MUDDY REACHES

OF THE YANGTSE RIVER

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I should be loathe indeed to let this book go into print without some little acknowledgment of the untiring kindness of my friends. This book—like my other books—would never have been written had it not have been for the faith and encouragement they have so freely given me. Especially am I indebted for the generous gift of time and skill, to

EDWIN G. NOURSE
HELEN E. HENDRICKS
ANNE STODDARD *and*
HARRIOT ELY FANSLER

Preface

MY novel, *Pidgin Cargo,* now published under its original title, *River Supreme,* was written, as was *Oil for the Lamps of China,* with a series of four novels in mind. Each of these I hoped would make some contribution to the understanding of that interesting but baffling phase of our American life—our contact with the Far East.

River Supreme, the first in this series, portrays perhaps the least understood of our activities in the Orient. It is the tale of the impact of our industrial civilization upon a country so thickly populated that a machine can only be envisioned as a monster devouring man's food. In it East and West lock horns in a struggle in which neither gives quarter. Such a story offers no opportunity for that slow understanding that grew between Stephen Chase and Ho in *Oil for the Lamps of China.*

Eben Hawley, the hero of the book, already shaped and hardened by the wild forces of the sea, embittered by the kind of humiliation that comes to Stephen at the end of *Oil for the Lamps of China,* determines to win back his self-respect by gaining fame and a livelihood by putting steamers on the most violent bit of river he knows, the Yangtse, and

bringing the power and speed of steamboats to a people he considers backward because they repudiate his conception of progress.

Here then is Eben Hawley, dreamer of boats who saw only that some day men swinging like monkeys on the crossbars of towing ropes would be gone, two thousand horse-power engines in their place. Let him stand beside Stephen Chase, dreamer of lamps who came to understand something of the dark struggle he had helped to bring about. Two men, themselves a part of the human cost of the advance of Western civilization; two dreamers crushed by the forces of the civilization they espoused.

Momentous as the meeting of West and East has been in machinery and business organization, there has been a yet more momentous meeting—that of our thought. This is to be the theme of the third book.

ALICE TISDALE HOBART

Contents

PROLOGUE 1

PART I . . . . . *The River* 5

PART II . . . . . *Struggle* 81

PART III . . . . *Achievement* 135

PART IV . . . . *Banner Years* 165

PART V . . . . . *The River* 259

Prologue

THE River. The Big River. The Long River. The Gold Dust River. The Yangtse. In two thousand years no one has been able to find a wholly adequate name for this unconquerable river which, dashing wildly forth from the remote peaks of the Himalayas, cuts her way through the heart of Asia four thousand miles to the sea. The River, the Chinese say, meaning The River Supreme. Let it go at that. Who would presume to confine her within the limits of one name if in two thousand years civilized man, living upon her banks, could not subdue her? The River—ugly, untamable, violent, beautiful, exaggerated.

The Gold Dust River they call the upper river. Down through gorges the tawny waters sweep in all their glory, all their cruel power, in whirlpools, in races, in rapids, between towering cliffs which rise straight up hundreds of feet, great black masses. Plunging down them to the swift-racing river, blood-red and taffy-

colored sheets of water hitting the river with a bang. Crash and roar of cataracts. Noise and turmoil of rapids. Beat, beat of drums. Pound, pound of tom-toms warding off the River's evil spirit. Shouts from hundreds of men straining on ropes, pulling the boats over the rapids. Commands, curses, prayers, cries of men going down, caught in a whirlpool, a rapid.

Pleading—

> *"Chiu ming, chiu ming,*
> Save life, save life,
> Oh River Supreme."

Strangely like The River, the yellow race who dwell upon her shores. Deep and secret flows the life of the yellow race. Unmixable, proud, aloof. A separate and exclusive people.

Part I

The River

RIVER SUPREME

I

THE hands on the clock of the Customs House down on the Shanghai Bund pointed to three o'clock—the most oppressive hour of the day. It was September. The heat, which at the beginning of May had set the moisture-laden air of the Yangtse Valley cities steaming, had reached a climax of intensity. In quivering waves it rose from the wide, wet streets which, starting at the Bund, ran to the edge of the white man's settlement. The branches of the trees hung over the walls of the gardens, limp and wilted. A pale tropic sun generated vapor out of the early morning's rain. Into this misty heat, the gray bowl of the sky shut the city.

The white people owned themselves beaten by the ordeal of the long summer. Since morning, the women, tense and exhausted, had lain on their beds under the swaying *punkahs*. The babies, waxen as lilies, wailed fretfully, or slept with fluttering, almost extinguished breath, while their *amahs* fanned them. In the offices on the Bund, the men were nervous and inactive.

But the walled-in Chinese City, which almost sur-

rounded the white settlement, hummed and vibrated without cessation. The men, stripped to their waists, lolled over the counters of their shops; their bare trunks glistened with sweat, which acted like nourishing oil, making their brown skins sleek and satiny. In the open shop-fronts the women sat with white cloth stockings loosened so that the air could reach their legs underneath the wide blue trousers above their bound feet. Contented, they watched the onrushing movement of the streets, delighting in its noise. On the naked children there were sores and boils, marks of the summer. Some of the frail and old died on days like this, but such minute loss did not disturb the deep-flowing vitality of the people.

Sickness did not matter. Neither did death. Marriage and birth mattered. They belonged to fertility. Incense mattered. Through the hot air its smoke rose to the nostrils of the fat-bellied god of plenty, to tempt him to make the race prolific. The tom-toms mattered, and the cymbals and the drums. All through the breathless afternoon yellow-robed priests, wherever there was ceremony of death, furiously beat the tom-toms, clashed the cymbals, pounded the red "Buddha's ear" drums of solid wood, forcing back evil from the stream of the living, from the dark subterranean stream of revered dead.

The stifling heat did not matter. Through thousands of years of looking into the vortex of life, the Chinese had learned better than to fight the forces of nature. Hidden away deep under the sur-

face, their energies flowed, feeding the everlasting current of existence to which they were content to belong.

Within the white man's settlement, Captain Eben Hawley, a heavy-set American of forty, was the only foreigner who triumphed over the weather, but not as the Chinese, by passive acceptance of it. Irritated, he fought against it. Some furious energy housed in his solid body beat back the enervating, enveloping heat. Every inch of him seemed fiercely alive, from the brown hair, rising like a crest, too full of life to be brushed smooth, to his light, quick-treading feet. When he walked, he threw his heavy shoulders forward as if he were too impatient to wait upon those quick-moving feet of his.

All day in his house, one of the finest mansions on Bubbling Well Road, he had been moving about, superintending the servants in the last packing, futilely using up his energies, urging them to haste. Now at three o'clock, just in time for the steamer, the packing was done, as it would have been without him.

"Should have been done an hour ago," he said, throwing a bunch of keys to his personal servant, who moved like a shadow behind him.

Fu Ling Ting caught the keys and, raising his long blue gown, placed them inside his belt. The mask of his features did not display his satisfaction that the packing was finished at three o'clock just as he had planned, or his discomfort because of the gnawing sensation in the pit of his stomach.

"Truly," he said to himself, "these outside barbarians sin greatly in their impatience. The master has been fed twice to-day, his boxes stand ready, and yet he shows no serenity, while I, Fu Ling Ting, who because of his many commands have not eaten since yesterday's afternoon meal, hold to the perfect way of calmness."

With Fu following in his wake, Captain Hawley now passed quickly from bedroom to bedroom, down the wide stairs through the dining-room, drawing-room, and library, taking in every detail. He gave a few last instructions to the caretaker, who followed behind Fu. Then he passed out through the front door and came to a stop on the bottom step of the veranda, where the pale half-light of the sun, shimmering through the humid atmosphere, beat down upon his uncovered head.

"Take it away," he commanded, as Fu brought him his sun helmet. "Pretty soon you'll be following me around with a hot-water bottle."

Everything annoyed him—Margaret, his wife, wandering tearfully through the rooms of the house which had been her home since infancy, bidding their empty spaces farewell; the coolies, without hats, immune to the danger of the sun, leisurely loading the last of the trunks on their cart, which stood in the drive at the foot of the steps; Fu, standing above him on the veranda out of the commotion.

"Look alive there, boy," he shouted. "Risk your dignity a mite! Shove those trunks along. The ship's off in another hour."

Fu stood, unheeding, his face as inexpressive as a mask. It was better not to hear the command of his master. Enough that his master should lose face by such show of impatience. Besides, moving trunks was coolies' work, and thus beneath him.

But what a man his master was! No wonder his countrymen, who always knew the heart, had given him the name of *Lao Hu*—"The Tiger." How massive he was in the shoulders, light in the legs and feet, built for the catlike spring of that fierce animal. Now there were those other two masters he had felt obliged to leave—him they called "The Big Bottle" and him they called "The Snake." He, Fu Ling Ting, lost too much face in belonging to their households. But even he could afford to serve "The Tiger."

Although Fu stood impassive, immaculate in his long white coat, freshly shaved forehead, and freshly braided queue, lengthened by a red tassel, Hawley knew he heard him. Such superiority to labor! He pushed aside the coolies, struggling indifferently with the last trunk, hoisted it upon his hip, and slid it into place on the cart. The exertion brought out perspiration in beads under his eyes and moistened his hair, making it cling to his scalp, but he felt eased by his explosion. He waved imperiously to the coolies to start their cart—it creaked away—and to the driver of the waiting victoria to take its place.

As he entered the house, Margaret, her long skirts trailing over the debris left by the packers, came

toward him down the hall. She held a lace handkerchief to her eyes. Her *amah* trotted anxiously at her side, futilely trying to fan the tall figure. Suddenly Eben Hawley felt with overpowering force the necessity to get away quickly, that if he did not, he would be caught in the trap of his wife's prejudice about going up the river, even though the furniture had been sold.

If she had only allowed him to sell the house, he would have felt more secure. But she had refused to give up this home her father had left her.

"Come, Margaret," he said. "We've got to go."

He put his arm around her, hurried her down the steps and into the victoria. Wedging himself into the space beside her, he motioned Fu and the *amah* into the little seat facing them.

Immediately the empty veranda was peopled with servants, noiselessly arranging themselves according to rank, each on a separate step—the cook, the number-two cook, the house coolie, the outside coolie, the *punkah* coolie, the gardener, the number-two gardener, the wash *amah,* the sew-sew *amah.*

"Good-by, Master. Great lady, good-by," they murmured politely.

The *mafu* cracked his whip, and the pony sprang forward. The number-two driver, who had been holding the pony's head, gathered the skirt of his white gown around him and sprang to the box by the driver's side, settling the chin-strap of his mushroom hat, resplendent with red fringe trailing from the apex.

The servants came down from the steps to the lawn and began setting off fire-crackers to scare away evil spirits. The coolie knelt in the drive and lighted a pile of little ones, which made a sputtering succession of tiny staccato sounds. The cook touched off a giant cracker. The number-two cook ran after the victoria and tied to its back a string of big ones, setting the pony into a run.

That force of Fu's, who were now out of jobs, were performing well their last duty. Fu was facing the house and could see. He had mentioned this to the servants the evening before when he had collected the money from them to buy the fire-crackers to bring joss to his and the master's departure. Still there were three noble fire-crackers he had not heard yet. Rascals! But then the cook's son needed medicine.

As the victoria passed through the gate, Margaret and Captain Hawley turned to bow to the servants, who had followed them down the drive. There was a final salvo of big and little explosions, then a single great report. "All but two," thought Fu philosophically.

Eben straightened his shoulders, calmer each moment, as the *clip-clapping* hoofs of the pony put the settlement behind them. Ahead of him he could now see the quay, and beyond it a forest of tall junk masts. He felt a masterful man once more, with the world put in its place, forgetting a little the last year when he had been the prey of his own weakness

and the ingrowing community's pitying curiosity. By an odd sensitive strain which ran through his masterfulness, he knew their pity had been mixed with contempt.

II

THE victoria swung smartly out of Nanking Road to the Bund. Eben could see the funnels of the *Kiangyu*. He had only to brace himself against the farewells on the dock; from the men there was probably no escape, as their offices were, most of them, just across the street, but surely the women would not come out on such a suffocating afternoon.

"By golly! Yes, they had!"

On the wharf, among the usual crowd of coolies loading cargo and Chinese passengers arguing with ricksha-men over their fees, stood a group of Margaret's friends.

"Damn," he ejaculated. "Even that poisonous Mrs. Henderson is here."

"Hush," whispered Margaret, leaning heavily on his arm. "They'll hear you."

"Don't care if they do," bitterly replied Eben.

"Well, well," ejaculated Mr. Henderson, taking Margaret's hand. "Here you are at last. The wife's had a fever all day—this terrible heat—but she insisted on coming to see you off. Said no one with any heart would stay home when a dear friend was starting on such a journey."

"Oh, my dear, we just had to come. We wanted

you to know how brave we think you are. How can you do it?" Mrs. Henderson's words reached Hawley as he stood surrounded by the men.

"You're making a mistake, Hawley," said Mr. Henderson at his side. "We've been in the shipping business now for twenty-odd years, and we think it's too great a risk to put ships beyond Hankow."

"So I've heard you say before. But suppose you had refused in the 'seventies to go beyond Shanghai? Where would you be now? You'll come to it. I'm only starting first, see?" replied Hawley, his temper rising.

"I don't see that that has anything to do with it," answered Henderson.

"Well, in ten years you may." Hawley turned his back squarely on the group and walked over to a pile of cargo against which a man in ship's uniform lounged, smoking a pipe.

"Stick it out, skipper, you'll win. I'd risk my last penny on this here scheme of yours," he said.

"Sure I will. You've not been on a freighter with me for ten years without knowing that." The two stood silently looking at the Whangpoo, surveying its ancient shipping—its three-masted sea-going junks, its river junks with their high poops, its bobbing sampans, and its new-comers, the steamers.

Bits of the conversation from the other group drifted to them. "Why, Hankow is a jumping-off place. And hot! . . . they say Shanghai is nothing compared with it. No ocean breeze there." Hawley did not bother to turn and see who had spoken.

"Beyond Hankow there isn't a city open to foreign trade."

"And the river is dangerous."

"It's just a place for missionaries and one or two dreamers like Archibald Little."

"I always thought Hawley was sound . . . too sensible for anything like this. Of course his sickness . . ." Suddenly the voices fell.

"Swine," snarled Hawley under his breath.

III

THE steamer dropped her mooring. There was a foot and then a widening stretch of water between the ship and the pier. Margaret leaned over the rail calling good-by.

Then, as the side-wheeler put her nose into the waters of the Whangpoo, headed out toward the Yellow Sea, where she would turn to go up the Yangtse, Eben was filled with great elation. He raised his hat; those waving friends would take his salute as a farewell to them. In reality it was in applause of himself and his magnificent undertaking. He was going into steam beyond Hankow!

Eben walked back and forth on the deck. A ship beneath his feet, the throb of the engines, the familiar scene, instead of giving him the sense of freedom he craved and had expected, proved strangely disturbing, enmeshing him in old moods and happenings! For many years he had come and

gone in his freighter, these shores, bright-green or yellow with rice, or black with marsh water, marking for him the beginning or the end of a journey. Some long dormant memory awoke, bringing to his mind his first voyage when as a deck-hand he had sailed on a tea-clipper around the Cape to the fabled China ports. The excited moment of arrival, the bustle on the bunds—the tea merchants riding in their sedan chairs to the tea *hongs,* their liveried chair-men stepping to the rhythm of the carrying chant, *"E-ho-e-ho,"* the clerks going ahead like retainers. To him, those British and American tea merchants had seemed like kings. But he had never even in his mind bowed the knee.

Six years ago, as skipper of one of Lynn & Lynn's freighters, he had come on business to the house of a tea merchant, Margaret's father, the house from which he had just taken Margaret away. That had been a hot summer evening too. Like to-night. He had been sitting with the old gentleman, sipping a mint-julep, when Margaret, all in drifting white, came up the steps from the garden. The vision of her fragile elegance took his breath. She was so tall and stately. When he rose to greet her, her eyes were almost on a level with his own. Their cool, untroubled blue depths challenged him. As she stood outlined against the blackness of the evening which enclosed the lighted veranda, her finely cut features reminded him of a white profile on a cameo brooch of jet his mother had worn when he was a child. Immediately he coveted her, the only woman he had

ever desired for his mate. It was the first time in his life he had felt humbled.

The next year, whenever he was in harbor, he had put aside his pride to worm invitations out of her old aristocrat of a father. But at the end of the year when he had told the tea merchant he wished to marry his daughter, he had not humbled himself. He had not considered himself any less an equal because he captained a freighter. That was Shanghai snobbishness. He wanted to marry Margaret because he loved her. He did grant her father the right to ask him if he could support her well. He had not doubted his ability to do so. How was he to foresee the catastrophe which a year ago had overtaken him?

Until then he had kept his word, giving Margaret far more than the comfort of the average sea-captain's wife. And he had sheltered her too, never telling her about his hardships: the exposure, the danger from typhoons and sea-bandits. These rough tales he kept for his comrades at the club.

That this last year had been different was not his fault. The promise to his father-in-law often tormented him, but one could not always let one's self be hampered by the dead.

IV

THE Whangpoo was widening out. There was about the steamer the quiet and order which comes after a ship is well under way. Margaret went to

her cabin, but Eben continued to pace the deck. His mind, as it had now for many weeks when he was idle, filled darkly with the details of his disaster a year ago. How tired he was of these dark thoughts, but how powerless to rid himself of them. Vain bitternesses, yet destroying the elation over his new project.

The steamer made her two-hour trip down the Whangpoo and steamed out across the wide water of the Yangtse's mouth before she turned up-stream. Now, Eben Hawley saw the Wusung anchorage, where vessels too big to come up the Whangpoo to Shanghai transshipped their cargoes. He had not seen it for a year. Gripping the hand-rail, he looked out toward the spot where, hard-pressed indeed, he had dropped anchor on that dreadful night of the typhoon. Again he heard the shrieking winds coming out of the four corners of the sea, felt the old freighter pitching, waves slapping the decks, masts swaying, rigging thrumming, the rain beating in torrents upon the bridge. My God! the anguish when, all anchors down, steam up, going full speed ahead, he had known his ship was drifting. He heard his chief officer calling to him, heard the splintering of wood, saw the great central mast snap like a tooth-pick, topple . . .

Why torture himself with the thought that he had not jumped far enough? The falling mast had grazed his skull. Why humiliate himself over the remembrance of how they had brought him home to Margaret? Paralyzed and clean off his head the

mate had found him. Yes, clean off his head he had come back to Margaret and the community of Shanghai. Slowly his mind had cleared, but his body . . . ugh, awful! Those months in a wheelchair. Ignominious!

Not even the comfort of a drink. That would kill him, the doctor had said. Well, let it! He had wanted to get away from the disgrace of his prematurely old body, lying inert. Fu had been with him at sea and did not dare disobey him. Ah! The satisfaction of a bottle again in his hand! He had poured a full glass, drunk it—and waited to die. His heart pumped harder and harder. The blood throbbed in his head. Then that sensation of something giving way inside his skull. The end, he had thought, of course.

Suddenly his foot had stirred. Creepy at first, seeing it move as if it weren't a part of him. Then he realized he could lift it and found he could sit up and stand up. Fu, crouching before him, yellow and scared, jibbering like a maniac. Margaret running to him, begging him to lie down. Lie down? Not on your life! He'd been lying down for months. Should have taken matters in his own hands long before.

Afterward the doctor said he had known there was one chance the liquor might make his heart pump the blood clot out. Poor fool! Then why had he not taken that one chance?

The *Kiangyu* was steaming steadily now over a calm and breathless sea, where here and there, en-

hancing the waste of waters, a junk with brown sail emptied of wind stood still as if entranced with its own majestic reflection. Unconscious of the scene, Eben walked back and forth, dragging his left foot as he had dragged it in moments of agitation ever since his recovery. He would never forgive his employers for what they did to him. "Wouldn't take me on again, damn 'em." An old shoe, he was. The company had discarded him. Starting over. Well, he was not done for yet.

V

WITHIN the shelter of the door to the pantry Fu Ling sat watching his master. Finally he arose and went down the inner passageway to Margaret's cabin. Entering at her command, he busied himself with the unpacking. As he stooped over a bag, he spoke.

"Master walk deck plenty time. Missie can hear?"

Margaret caught the halt in her husband's impatient step. He was brooding again. The doctor had warned her that great emotion might cause his still sluggish blood to clot again. Almost a miracle, his recovery, but not one that was likely to be repeated even in a man of Hawley's superb physique. These bitter moods filled her with dread that her husband might be replaced by the prematurely old man who had once before been brought to her.

For this reason she had consented to his wild

scheme, feeling certain he must fail, but hoping he would then be content to live in Shanghai or even in America, their country which she had never seen. And here he was pacing up and down just as he had paced so often at home! With a sigh, she dressed and joined him on the deck. Once she started to speak. Then she caught a glimpse of his eyes, moody and defiant, and remained silent.

All at once Eben realized that they had entered the broad reaches of the lower Yangtse. Her heavy, muddy waters flowed past them to the sea. A thin line of brown, deeper in color than that around them, just visible on the starboard side, marked the left shore. The suffering and humiliation of the past months fell away. His great project came back to him. He was on his own now. Never, never again would he serve. Shaking himself like a great animal ridding itself of rain, he drew Margaret's arm through his, fitting his step to hers. No longer dragging his foot, he walked quietly, watching the day end.

The sun, an orange ball ringed with misty heat waves, moved toward the horizon, far off beyond the rice paddies on the right bank, and then dipped quickly out of sight, suffusing with diaphanous flame the black waters of the rice-stubbed marshes. The left bank lay in darkness except where the afterglow of the sun faced a rice shock with light. Between moved the river, flowing heavily, like liquid brass. A solitary junk, bobbing like a cork on the swell of

the steamer, slid behind them. Across the water came the creak of the junk oar in its lock.

"It's so lonely," murmured Margaret.

Eben, feeling a tremor pass through her, for a moment was sorry for her. But he was going to be very good to her.

"Let's go in where it's bright," he said gently.

As they went down the passageway leading from the saloon, he stopped to read the passenger list, a slip of paper fastened with thumb-tacks inside a glass case on the wall.

"Look, Archibald Little is on board. That's my first bit of luck," he murmured excitedly as they entered their cabin.

"Why are you so glad? How can a tea-taster be of any help to you?"

"He's not a tea-taster now. He only did that for a little while. He's a real explorer. He knows more about this river than any other white man. He built a small tug to go through the gorges. The gorges, mind you! Worst part of the river."

Hawley was splashing his face vigorously with water. "Why, it's what Little has done that got me interested."

"Oh," said Margaret, at once disliking Mr. Little.

"Strange we did not see him on the dock. Well, anyway, it's a fine chance for me to learn more about the river." Eben took a comb from his vest pocket, passing it through the crest of stiff brown hair.

Margaret, knowing that her husband had already forgotten her except as the recipient of his thoughts and plans, felt lonely and isolated. As she glanced out of the port-hole she saw the steamer was moving close to the left shore. The winter drop had already begun, and the bank stood above the deck-rail like a wall shutting her into the river.

VI

SILHOUETTED against the sky along the dike paths, their rice sickles in their hands, walked the farmers, returning slowly to their ancestral villages. For them life took on a pattern as exact as the dikes which divided the country-side into neat squares. Thousands of years before, the land had been so divided. The Chow Li had decided it and appointed the farmers to their high place at one of the corners of the social structure. Four-square they stood—scholar and farmer, laborer and tradesman. At the apex of the pyramid the Son of Heaven, the emperor, who ruled a square world surrounded by water. Generation after generation, life in the Flowery Kingdom flowed on unchanged. And the pattern was kept sacred there in the villages before the household shrines where men worshipped their ancestors. So, in time, when they passed on into the subterranean stream, would their sons worship them and continue to keep the design. But that "wheel-

boat" out there on The River Supreme, and the outside barbarians who tended it? What place had they in the ancient way of life?

VII

WHEN they went to dinner in the saloon, the hot light from the dozen kerosene lamps beat down upon them with a merciless glare. The Chinese steward was moving about, closing the shutters in order to keep the reflection off the water. Even on this lower river the Yangtse has a ticklish channel, and on the dropping water there was danger of running aground.

Already in his place at the head of the table sat the captain of the steamer, with Mr. Little on his left. Recognizing Margaret, Little rose.

"I am glad indeed to see you. You were such a tiny thing the last time I visited your father. I've been away in England and up this river so much of late years."

"We were talking about the river," he said, turning to Eben. "I understand you are interested."

Eben nodded, watching Little, and thinking he looked the capable pioneer—only by chance a tea-taster as he had told Margaret. He was eating quickly, nervously, piling his food on his fork. A bit of this, a bit of that. Piling up fragmentary bits of talk in the same way.

"The future of China and of foreign trade lies on the Yangtse . . . resources untouched . . . enormous population in Yangtse Valley . . . needs outlet . . . ought to be one of the great markets of world . . . wealth in it for all three, China, England, America. . . . Not just this present small trade in silk and cotton. Must have steamers up through the gorges. Fancy it takes longer to get piece-goods the five hundred miles to Chungking than it does to bring them out here from England . . . We cannot let these people go their own way."

Eben felt his pulses quicken.

"Mark my words, though," broke in the captain of the *Kiangyu,* "you'd better be careful. This river gets you in the end."

"Oh, the river is all right," continued Mr. Little. "But the Chinese officials are difficult to deal with. They are afraid they will lose some of the 'squeeze' if the steamers come. They incite the junkmen, rouse their hatred and superstitions. They tell them the steamers will anger the dragon in the river."

"Machinery will change their whole lives." A missionary at the other end of the table cut into the conversation. "You are killing an enormous native industry."

"Well, what of it?" asked Hawley. "Aren't we giving them something in its place? Aren't our steamers better than their junks?"

"But . . ." The missionary hesitated, timidity creeping over him. "What about the junkmen? How will they live?"

"Be absorbed into the work on the steamers; given light work in the place of the animal labor they do now," quietly replied Little.

"Archibald, Archibald," said the *Kiangyu's* captain, leaning toward him, "you are playing with fire. Go back to your tea-tasting. If these natives don't like an idea, they will win out. They are cleverer than you or I, and they have the patience. They can out-wait us every time, and they will beat you in the end." With this parting warning, he excused himself to go back to the bridge.

Little turned to Eben. "I think I heard in Shanghai that you are interested in that stretch between Hankow and Ichang. Have you ever thought about the river farther up? That, I think, is where the opportunity really lies."

A Chinese assistant came for the chief engineer. A tired-looking American woman dressed in native clothes, undoubtedly a missionary, Margaret thought, left when the men began smoking. A Russian tea merchant and a Catholic priest finished their coffee, excused themselves, and went to their cabins. The one first-class Chinese passenger, who spoke no English, and sat at a table by himself, fell asleep in his chair. At last every one had drifted away except Little and Eben who, absorbed in talk, sat on over their coffee, and Margaret, who waited for them to be done.

"This is the way I see it," continued Little. "Much of the development of foreign trade out here hangs on the upper Yangtse." He picked up a spoon the

boys had overlooked and began drawing on the table-cloth. "This is Tibet and the Himalayas, this thin stream running down from them the beginning of the Yangtse. Here at Suifu it gets wide enough for junk trade. Like a solitary road it runs through the richest part of China, the province of Szechuan. Tapping an area like that, no wonder the Chinese call it the Gold Dust River. Think of the magnificant opportunities if we put steamers up there. We can out-travel the native junks by weeks. It's a fine opportunity both to develop world commerce and to make money. That is where the big freight rates will be. Dangerous, I grant you, for it is full of rapids and currents. But steam can master it."

He picked up his spoon again, putting in below the little crisscross lines which he had drawn to indicate the rapids and the races of the upper river, a smooth line. "This middle part which you plan to operate is monotonous and uninteresting. Don't bother with it. The big companies like this one, like the one you've just left, will soon put steamers here and crowd you out. If I were you, I'd go up where they are too conservative to take the risk and get ahead of them."

As he talked, he made a heavier line to represent the broad lower reaches which they were now traversing, thus carrying the river down to the coast and the Yellow Sea. "Now you have it," he said, rising. "Upper river, middle, and lower, but the upper is the place if you have nerve enough."

"See, Margaret, I'm not the only one interested in this thing," said Eben.

As if Mr. Little's dreams proved anything, thought Margaret.

Afterward, when they had gone to bed and Eben in his excitement and in the heat of the little cabin kept turning in his narrow bunk over her, she said, "I just don't see."

"Don't see what?" said her husband.

"I tried to-night."

"See what?" asked Eben irritably.

"Why you want to put steamers on the river? Why do you want to do anything so hard? You seem to want to fight this river, to exert your power over it."

Eben Hawley sought to explain. "My family have always done things like this. My great uncle went out to help settle Kansas. My father put every cent he could get hold of into tea-clippers. I don't know; in the blood, I guess."

He was drifting off to sleep, uninterested in why he wanted to do it, when suddenly he was wide awake with an idea that settled his guilt about taking Margaret away from Shanghai.

"Why, your father was just the same," he exclaimed. "He came out here, a hundred and ninety days in a bark around the Cape, dragging your ma to Shanghai when it was a mud heap. Wasn't even content to go to a settled place like Foochow. He took her to the newest, most uncomfortable settle-

ment there was. Of course, all right when you were born. Father wanted it soft for you, but he didn't spare your ma."

"No, he didn't. She died longing to go back. Father never would talk about it. Only that he wanted to make it up to her through me."

"That's all right," Hawley broke in. The rope slats sagged under him as he turned heavily. "Didn't give in to your ma's wanting to go home to America nor to yours either. Men's way, I guess."

They slept. Beneath the steamer the river flowed black and secret.

VIII

THE side-wheeler pushed on through the caramel-colored waters. The rains had begun and the heat continued, unabated. Margaret sat on the deck, watching the landscape emerge out of the mists —stretches of country covered with thousands of grave mounds. Gray masses of masonry appeared in the distance, took shape in parapeted city walls, dropped out of sight behind, to be followed by others appearing and dropping away. Temples and monasteries—strongholds of ancient beliefs—stood out boldly.

Now and then they stopped at a city to take on or discharge cargo. Often they anchored in midstream, the Chinese refusing to allow the foreign boats to dock. Sometimes Margaret saw crowds of people on the foreshore or the top of a city wall,

staring at the "fire-boat." How proud they seemed, how masked their faces, how shut their cities.

She tried to read, to write. She talked a little with the missionary woman. From her came no reassurance. The Chinese did not want the outside barbarian's churches, his hospitals, or his ships. Apprehension grew within her. This struggle of East and West was a part of her family history. Since the first day of the clipper-ships, the intercourse of the Occident with the Flowery Kingdom she knew had been marked by bloodshed. She felt bowed down, stricken with the volume of hate pressing upon her spirit as the steamer carried her nearer and nearer the heart of this country. But it did not seem to bother Eben. Each day he looked more energetic, more cheerful. She began to realize that hate was stimulating to him. To her and her feelings he gave but scant attention. He had no thought but for the river and the conversation of Archibald Little.

"I'm thinking about that upper river," he said one day, as the two men paced the deck before dinner. "But the Chinamen up there are mighty proud, aren't they? Don't pay much attention even to what Peking says. How do you reckon it can be managed? Didn't they keep you from running your *Kuling* after you got her built?"

"Yes," Mr. Little said, "I had to give that up. The viceroy of Szechuan beat me on a technicality, claiming the treaty did not mean that foreign steamers could run until there were Chinese steamers."

"So I understood," said Eben.

"Still," said Mr. Little firmly, "it's bound to come soon. The world is not going to let this Yangtse stay closed to trade and progress. If you'll learn the upper river now, you will be ready when that time comes."

IX

ON the fifth day the steamer came in sight of the three cities of Han. Toward noon it pulled alongside the dock at Hankow on the right. The sun shone through vaporous air. Even in the shade on the deck, the thermometer stood at one hundred, with the humidity just below the saturation point. As the boat stopped, the breeze it had created died away. On the white suits of the captain, Mr. Little, and Eben, between the shoulders and in the crease of the sleeves, spots of perspiration appeared. Eben had moist lines across his white canvas shoes. Margaret, dressed exquisitely in a sheer gray lawn, the sleeves and the collar edged with the frailest white ruching, her light hair done in a great knot on the top of her head, stood between Mr. Little and Eben, surveying the white man's settlement—a broad roadway running along the top of the Bund, bordered on the far side by the mansions of the tea merchants. Behind it rose the wall of the native city.

"Is that all there is to the settlement?" she asked.

"Just this one street?" After a moment she exclaimed in astonishment: "Why, the place is deserted. Most of the houses are shuttered!"

Eben did not answer.

"Live here—next to the river and all this noise?" Margaret's voice trembled as she urged her question upon Eben.

Up to them, from the foreshore, rose the chant of the coolies—*"Eee-ya, eee-ya, e-ho"*—as long lines of them, heavily laden with cargo, trotted back and forth from the warehouses to the junks.

"The place is gay enough when the tea people are here," gently remarked Mr. Little, looking at her and thinking how unfit she appeared for the task her husband had undertaken. "Too fastidious," was his silent verdict, "and a little spoiled."

"That is only for a short time in the spring." Margaret's dislike of Mr. Little was growing. As if one could live a whole year on a month of gaiety.

"There's Roberts," Mr. Little observed, lifting his hat to an immaculately dressed Englishman who had just arrived on the dock. "I think I can arrange for you to stay with him for a few days."

"Oh, we must not impose," protested Margaret. "We don't know him."

"That does not matter up here," Mr. Little explained. "Roberts is always glad to have company."

Margaret looked at him searchingly. So down in his heart he knew it was lonely here.

X

THROUGH the afternoon in Mr. Roberts's guest-room, which overlooked the waterfront, Margaret waited for Eben. When he left she had realized he had something on his mind, but he had not taken her into his confidence. She lay on the bed, nervous and exhausted with the heat. The white man's settlement, one street wide, all but deserted, set down between the native city and the junks on the river, preyed upon her spirit. She felt caught, as if all the doors in a house had been locked upon her.

By three, the room, unequipped with a *punkah,* had grown stifling. From time to time along the passage outside her room she heard a *pad-pad*—advancing, receding. Servants walking in their cloth shoes, a sound she had heard all her life. And yet to-day, deprived of the sense of protection which the big foreign settlement of Shanghai had always given her, the stealthy tread filled her with apprehension.

At five o'clock she rose mechanically and, with fingers which shook, dressed for tea. As she finished, she heard Eben walking quickly along the passageway. The door-knob turned under his hand.

"Margaret, I've made up my mind that Little is right," he burst forth as he stepped briskly into the room. "The place to start is above Ichang. Little says I can leave you there with missionaries while

I go up through the gorges. I want to get off in a few days—as soon as it gets a little cooler. There ought to be a break in the weather soon."

Margaret's relief gave way to hot anger. She stood up, with a fling of white draperies, and faced him. "Why, you said I should have a comfortable home here in Hankow. Have you forgotten that?"

"Well, you haven't appeared to be particularly pleased with the place." Eben shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to the other.

"That's no reason for going to a worse one. Is this the way you keep your promise to father?"

"See here, Margaret, what's the use in actin' like this?" he blustered. "I ain't asking you to do anything that'll hurt you." He wasn't going to be bullied by a dead man. What did the old man have to do with it anyway? He had done as he pleased with his own wife.

Margaret trembled. "How many white people are there in Ichang," she asked faintly.

"Six."

There was a knock at the door. The coolie entered, placed a lighted lamp on the table, turned low, and then brought a long pole to draw the heavy curtains. Before he reached the last high open window, a bat darted through it into the room, circling blindly. Margaret gave a cry of terror and fainted.

In one stride Eben reached her. He laid her on the bed, brought water and bathed her face. Margaret opened her eyes. "Eben, it's a sign to us," she pleaded. "It's a bad omen—bats are bad luck.

Give up this wild scheme. This river has something awful about it. I've heard my father say it has a mysterious power. I've felt it ever since we left Shanghai. Please leave it alone. It's doing something to you . . . it's making you cruel . . . and the people, they don't want us."

She watched with strained attention as Eben's jaw set and his mouth narrowed to a thin line.

"Pshaw," he said, "you are working yourself up over nothing. That's a silly superstition. Can't be. The Chinese put bats on their pictures and things for good joss."

"That is what I am trying to tell you. We and the Chinese don't look at things alike. What is good for them is bad for us. Please, Eben. If you will promise not to go farther, I won't fuss about Hankow."

"We won't talk about it any more to-night. You are too tired," answered Eben.

Looking up, Margaret saw in the ring of light the lamp cast on the ceiling the distorted shadow of the bat. Huge and lowering, it hung over her—body of a rat, membranous wings, repulsive and portentous. She covered her head with the pillow, sobbing and laughing in a hysteria, terrible and humiliating.

Eben went about the business of getting rid of the bat, then sitting down on the edge of the bed passed his hand, enlarged by rough toil but white from the year of his invalidism, back and forth over her hair. Presently, as Margaret ceased to cry, he for-

got her. His lips drew apart in a smile of satisfaction as he thought of the afternoon and of his friend Mr. Liu's offer to give him a letter to the viceroy of Szechuan, the very man who had blocked Little in taking his boat up-river. Liu had been a fine friend ever since he had done him that small service when the old chap had been comprador for Lynn & Lynn. Strange gift for friendship the Chinese had. Good haters in the large—aloof, proud; and awfully conceited about their country, but they understood friend *pidgin*.

And wasn't he a grand old dog as he had found him that afternoon, sitting in the tea-house of his walled-in garden, drinking tea and surveying his budding chrysanthemums. "Two thousand pots," Liu had said with pride. Eben wished Margaret could have seen them. Perhaps she would feel differently about Chinamen if she saw such things. Good to get her into the interior. That settlement in Shanghai was too damned exclusive . . . but then so were the Chinamen. Even Mr. Liu had never asked him into his house. Never would, probably. His garden, with its entrance separate from his dwelling, was a kind of public place where he met certain not too intimate friends. Eben understood the custom perfectly.

Suddenly he ceased to stroke his wife's hair. His blue eyes shone like those of a mystic. Against the drawn curtains of the windows there seemed to be a yellow river foaming down between black cliffs. Up

the racing current moved a flotilla of trig little steamers, floating the house-flag of Eben Hawley's steamship line. He passed his hand over his eyes. Had he seen a vision? He felt giddy in the close, hot room.

In answer to a knock at the door, he stood up, staring dazedly at the house-boy, very precise in a blue gown topped with a sleeveless black jacket of filigreed gauze.

"Chow leady," murmured the boy.

Downstairs the Hawleys found the commissioner and Mr. Little sitting in wicker chairs on the veranda, sipping whisky sodas, their long British legs covered with pillow-cases.

"Pardon me for not rising, Mrs. Hawley," said their host. "The mosquitoes are in full force tonight. But there is a comforting side to it. It means the worst heat is over. Even the mosquitoes can't live when it is at its height. How we manage to exist, I don't know. Have a drink, Hawley."

In an effort to keep up the conventions, Margaret smiled faintly, but she was too heart-sick to manage more. Mr. Roberts, sensing that her reserves of strength were low, courteously filled in the gap.

"We are having dinner a little early in order to let the servants off. It's a festival. The river people float paper cups full of oil on the water in honor of those drowned during the year. It's rather a pretty sight. We must go out after dinner and see it, if you feel equal to it."

XI

FU, bent on his master's business, picked his way along the muddy foreshore of the river, eyeing the city of junks. Finally, he turned in at a row of medium-sized craft, and took the road of planks laid from boat to boat. He directed his way around the charcoal braziers, with the boat people squatting around them. Occasionally with the toe of his black satin shoe he pushed from his path on to a boat's deck a bundle which emitted the wail of a child.

At last he stopped and addressed a figure squatting alone in a junk's prow, sucking at his hubble-bubble, the silver side of which gleamed as a tiny flame glowed in its bowl.

"I seek the honorable Tang."

"My miserable name is Tang, and what is your honorable one?" the shadow made answer.

"My most miserable name is Fu Ling Ting," the servant of Eben Hawley replied. He lifted the tail of his gown, and sat down on his heels beside the shadow. "How many sons has the honorable Tang?"

"There are no sons in my house." The boatman answered the ancient salutation, although it cost him great pain, bringing to his mind his loss of face before all men and his harrowed existence in the next world if no sons ever came to worship him after

death. Why did the gods so afflict him? Still, there was reason for hope this evening.

He returned the salutation, and Fu acknowledged he had two miserable sons. Tang passed him the water pipe. Leisurely, the servant of Eben lighted it by means of a paper spill held first to the near-by brazier. The water gurgled in the pipe. Once, twice, Fu puffed, then handed it back to its owner, ready now to start on the business in hand.

"Old Manager, you go up The River Supreme as far as the Rapids?"

Tang merely grunted.

"My master wishes a boat. How much money?"

Tang named the sum.

"Ai-yah!" exclaimed Fu. *"Tai kuei, tai kuei,* too much, too much. Your honorable boat is dirty."

"Dirty!" Tang was indignant. "Not dirty. I know now. Your honorable self is the servant of that outside barbarian who arrived to-day. Only a barbarian would be so particular about a little dirt. For barbarians I must add more money. Always they say 'hurry, hurry.' It is disturbing." The old manager was warming to the bargain. He sucked the hubble-bubble with satisfaction.

"It is possible for the outside barbarbian you should have more, but have mercy upon me, a countryman of yours. My master is not called 'The Tiger' in Shanghai for nothing. He would beat me if I paid so much money. I must add money of my own, and he pays me so little," whined Eben's servant. "But one dollar I add." He settled back com-

fortably on his feet. There was plenty of time.

"Say a dollar more. Not good luck to carry the ugly mistress with yellow hair. The boat people all saw her. They are talking about her."

Fu pulled comfortably at the hubble-bubble which the old manager once more handed him before he answered. "There are small animals on your boat that bite. I always pay less for that kind of a boat."

"That is not to be considered. It is always thus. It cannot be helped, so why bother about it? No, I have said." The boatman was firm.

They continued to smoke, turn and turn about.

"Ai-yah!" suddenly exclaimed Fu, "one has bitten me. I go to seek another boat." So saying, he rose and walked slowly away.

The old manager surveyed him with indifferent eyes until he had all but passed from hearing. Then he called after him, "Add two dollars and you have the boat."

Fu walked on. "One," he called back, and moved more slowly.

The old manager spoke not again. Fu waited a moment, then returned and in a nonchalant tone called the deal settled and sealed it with "bargain money."

The boatman took it, rose, wound his queue around his head and stepped down under the hood of his boat.

"Woman, hand me the cash-box," he commanded what seemed to be a bundle of bedding lying on a bit of matting on the floor. A lighted stub of

a candle guttered in the wind of his movements and went out.

"Old man," came in a muffled tone from the bedclothes, "here it is under my head. The child is born. Heaven did not hear. It is a girl . . . but a large healthy girl . . . good at the oar."

"Ai-yah! Ch'ih k'u la, ch'ih k'u la. I eat bitterness. I eat bitterness," cried the boatman, removing the cash-box from under her head. "Before morning, let it be given to the river."

"A fine healthy girl. Good at the oar."

"Fine healthy girls eat much rice, must buy candles, must buy incense *pai Pusa* (to sacrifice to Buddha). I have spoken, good-for-nothing one. *Ai-yah,* I eat bitterness."

Fu took his way back over the road of planks. As he did so, he lifted the long skirt of his silk gown and placed in his money pouch at his belt the dollar he had made on the transaction. He had hoped to make two, but the old boatman had been very hard. These outside people were very difficult to deal with. Now if Tang had only been a man from his own province, they would have understood each other better.

As Fu Ling Ting walked on, he heard behind him a little splash, something falling into the water. It was nothing—probably that girl he had overheard the old manager talking about. Just as well. It might bother Missie with its cries. With complacency he thought of his bargain. The boat was very clean.

Even Missie could not complain. There were no vermin. Most unusual.

As Fu reached the top of the quay he saw a sampan pulling upstream, dropping tiny lights from its stern. He settled himself comfortably on his heels and watched the river, now silvered by the moon, until upon it rode thousands and thousands of the spirit flames.

Behind him, over in the Chinese city in the network of narrow streets, the moon threw the pattern of the curving roofs. Down into the courtyards of the patriarchal families the moon had thrown the pattern of curved roofs for thousands of years, always the same. But over in the street of the white man's settlement, wide and clean, the shadows took on a new pattern, the pattern of foreign houses with high-pillared verandas.

Finally Fu rose and went into the town to spend the night among his kind. It meant rising early to be in time to bring Master and Missie their morning tea, but he slept better amid the proper noise of a Chinese city.

Before twelve, the strident voices of chair-bearers; the high singing petition of blind men's flutes; the wail of babies, fretful with the heat of the night; an undertone of soft moans of girl children in pain with their bound feet; and the groans of the old and sick. After twelve, all other noises drowned by the barking of wolf-like dogs, roaming in packs, never quiet, hungry and lean and mangy, hundreds

of them giving chase to one who had found a bare bone. In the cities of Han, where there is not enough for man to eat, the dogs must rove and whine with hunger all through the hot night. Men and beasts in an over-populated land, crying out. Still in the hearts of the people a cry, a prayer, goes up: "Sons, more sons!" The ancestors clamor for sons. There is no evil but in breaking the stream of life.

XII

TWO weeks later, when Eben and Margaret took the junk for Ichang, Mr. Little came down to the river to see them off.

"Not a bad berth, eh? Pretty snug, I'd say," Eben appealed to Mr. Little, glancing sidewise at Margaret.

The junk was hardly more than a rowboat with a covered top and mast. Fu squatted in the prow in a triangular-shaped space just large enough for him, the brazier, and the poling men. These stood now, one on each side, poles in hand, ready to push forward the rude craft. Fu was fanning a fire in a charcoal brazier. On it stood a pot which Margaret divined held the noon meal. Amidships were their living quarters.

"Careful, don't hit your head," cautioned Eben as he took her hand and helped her down into the dark space, where two camp cots stood neatly made up. There was just room to walk between, and

Margaret found she was too tall to stand erect under the rough matting top. Beyond was another section from which they were separated by a partition. Through its cracks she could see two naked men, with matted hair, lying on the floor asleep, curled up together like two animals in a lair. In the stern, by a wood tiller, squatted a coolie woman, tending a stove identical with Fu's and another steaming pot. Margaret felt her eyes filling with tears and a lump came in her throat.

"Good luck to you." Mr. Little wrung Eben's hand. "I'll see you when I get back from this trip to England . . . next autumn I hope. By that time our Government may have succeeded in making the Chinese stand by their treaty agreement. You will find that upper river very interesting. At times it tries to flow two ways at once. You will need a year or two to study it."

He turned to Margaret with a smile. "You'll like it, Mrs. Hawley, after you get used to it. My wife does." Margaret could not answer.

Mr. Little jumped from the deck to the shore and raised his hat in farewell.

"Luck, Hawley," they heard him call out. "The farther west you go, the greater the pull westward. Cheerio."

The poling men walked down the deck, sticking their iron-tipped poles into the sides of the other junks, into the river bottom. Step by step, the junk moved upstream. In a wild beseeching cry they called the wind to come and help. As if in answer, a

faint breeze sprang up. They hoisted the sail. If there were no winds, all the four hundred miles to Ichang these men would have to walk up and down the deck, or along the shore, pulling on the tow ropes.

Margaret and Eben stood together. Looking back over the junk's hooded top, first Mr. Little, then Hankow, the last outpost of their own civilization, slipped from sight. Margaret burst into tears.

XIII

IT was November, four weeks later. The brilliant sun was nearing the time of sunset when the junk, all sails set, blown along by a wind drawing out of the southeast, rode forth from the Tiger Teeth Gorge. Ahead of them Eben and Margaret beheld the city of Ichang, gateway to the upper river. Its massive buttressed wall, a great medieval fortress, stood forth on the top of a cliff. Behind it rose a confused mass of mountains, piled up in jumbled magnificence against the amber western sky.

Eben's heart leaped up within him. Somewhere in among those ragged ranges the Gold Dust River raced in all her glory.

The current grew swifter and swifter; junks sprang up like magic all around them, making for the city ahead. The sun dipped from sight. With it went the breeze. The sails came down, naked men

slid into the water, made for the high bank, untangling their towing ropes, pulling the boats along, singing the chant of the tracker.

Despite the current, every moment increasing in strength, the old manager's junk came quickly along the remaining distance. Its trackers exerted every muscle, lay on the bars at the end of their towing ropes. Straining! Pulling! Arms swinging, hands almost touching the ground, like the long front paws of half-erect apes. "Pork and wine ahead!" This outside barbarian was a fool with his money. They knew what he paid the *laodah* for the trip. He would be a fool too with the wine money.

"In peril, in peril; untangle the lines," called the old manager, watching in the prow.

"Pull," shrieked his wife, standing in the stern of the boat, manipulating the steering gear. "Pull, I say, you sons of turtles whose mothers fertilize themselves. For what do you think the old man feeds you rice?"

"*Chor, chor.* Put your shoulders to it, put your shoulders to it," chanted the shore full of trackers.

A huddle of junks beyond a sand spit took shape —whaleback craft with rounded sides, craft specially built for the gorges. From the tips of bare masts floated red flags, spear-shaped—the flags of good joss. Smoke from hundreds of cooking braziers lay over the river. Louder grew the roar rising from the massed boats; junks knocked together; anchor chains clinked; men shouted and cursed; women harangued; babies cried. Junks headed up

river, junks headed down, fought for a place in the crowded harbor. Fire-crackers exploded; tom-toms and cymbals beat and clanged.

The Hawley junk, all the trackers on board now, shouting and poling, knocked its way in among the already close-packed mass until at last the *laodah* found a place to his liking and paid out his anchor chain over the side.

Margaret, repelled but fascinated by the scene, rose and went far back under the hood of the junk, where she could not see the boat people and where they could not peer curiously at her, calling her a foreign devil. She had learned much in the month's journey from Hankow. During those days of boredom, which made her almost physically ill, she had learned to hide from these people who, when they were unfriendly, threw stones at the boat or obscene words, and who, when they were friendly, came and handled her with their dirty, yellow, long-nailed fingers.

For a long time Eben sat in the prow amid the din. A thousand miles of the river lay behind him. Above him hung the city of Ichang, portal to the rich hinterlands of western China. The river, in her winter drop of a hundred feet, had left the city perched like an untidy eagle's nest at the top of the bank. The refuse from the nest tumbled down in great heaps, and black, uneven veins of drainage seeped over them. Beggars and wolf-like dogs clawed in them for food and, as darkness settled down, from under the conglomerate ledges of the

cliff, partially undermined by the spring freshets, the fires of the beggars sent forth their flame and smoke, making a scene wild enough to satisfy even Eben.

At last he rose and peered down into the black recess where Margaret sat. "I'm going to look round a little. Stay inside," he told her. "You are all right here. I won't be long." He called Fu to follow him, and they joined the junkmen making their way up the steep steps to the city.

XIV

HE walked along, head and shoulders above the crowd which flowed through the narrow streets under the curved points of the roofs, jutting out like the prows of ships. In close-packed cubicles, both workshop and home, women, sitting in low chairs amid the debris of the bamboo strands from which the great cables were made, cried sharply to their children: "Quickly behind me, Small Precious, Little Dragon. A foreign devil. He will take your eyes for medicine for his brats." To themselves they muttered: "White skin. A dead man bleached in lime come to life. A devil conceived by a man and a hawk. White eyes come from a devil-man bred with a fish. *Ai-yah! Ai-yah!*" Over the heads of their nursing babes they spread their yellow hands, fingers wide apart, in an ineffectual gesture of protection.

Eben walked on, unconscious of the consternation

he was creating, until a squat riverman blocked his way. So this was the giant they were speaking about in the tea-house to-night. Strange talk. Not good talk. The giant had come up here with a captured dragon that spit fire and smoke to put it in a boat. Taking our work, not using trackers to pull him along, not using a sail.

"I tell you," shouted the boatman to the gathering crowd, "the dragon in the river won't like this new dragon. Trouble."

"Ai-yah!" But they let Eben pass. No time to-night to bother with this albino of a man—but if he spoiled their joss of wind and water. . . . Stepping into shops to buy cocks for the sacrifice, candles, incense, cables. Soon they were deep in their bargains, passing the long ropes through their hands, examining every fiber. Should there be a weak strand, when a hundred trackers pulled upon it, the cable might break and the junk would go swirling to ruin, sucked down by the rapids.

At length Eben came to a silver shop, a stone-lined cavern lighted by horn lanterns suspended from the ceiling. He stopped, his attention caught by an old woman standing at the high counter haggling for a bracelet and hair ornaments. It roused Eben's curiosity to see a woman, obviously of the coolie class, with so imperious a manner. "She appears an influential dame, but, whew, she's ugly," he murmured to himself, noticing her skin, dry as parchment, her scalp shining like a brown gourd between the scant jet strands of her hair drawn tightly

across it and confined in a coil of dingy leather in the nape of her neck. "Who do you suppose she is?" he asked of his servant standing dutifully behind him.

"I no savee," Fu Ling replied. "P'laps b'long *laodah*. Plenty this side makee boss men. No ploper. Master come. This no b'long good place for Master, Missie. Sometime makee hurt."

"Nonsense," Eben answered him. "You are afraid of your own skin."

"Master, more better not stop," begged Fu Ling, ignoring Eben's insinuation.

But Eben continued to stare at the woman, delighted in the sharp bargain it was evident she was driving, paying no attention to the men again slowly gathering around him. Closer they edged. Some one reached cautiously out and touched the wool of his coat-sleeve. He grinned sociably. The man drew quickly back among his fellows.

The old woman completed her bargain, placed the spear-shaped ornament above the leather coil at the nape of her neck, drew her bony hand through the bracelet, heavy as a manacle, and turned to go. What was she doing? She had raised her hand. The fingers were drawn apart and down, their dirty inch-long nails curled under, like the claw of an evil-omened bird. Suddenly Eben realized she was pointing at him, and in that moment she began to shriek, brandishing her claw at him, then at the crowd, then at the heavens.

He heard a low roar surging up about him. He looked around. A sea of faces hemming him in, faces

with bridgeless noses flaring out into wide nostrils, hundreds of shining black eyes, the eyelids folding over them like flaps, heavy mouths full of yellow teeth. They drew nearer, suffocating him with their nearness and a strange odor, not the odor of white people. He could not will himself to move. Those faces held him in a spell.

A cry broke from the mouths with the yellow teeth. *"Yang kwei tzu,* foreign devil, foreign devil! Strike! Kill!" The angry roar roused him. He tried to move. Men's bodies wedged him tight.

"Chop, chop. Master, follow!" He saw Fu suddenly in front of him, waving his arms like a whirling dervish, now commanding the crowd. "Open the way! Open the way!"

Stones hit Eben's face, his shoulders. A squat brute, sleeves rolled to his elbows, forearms like sledge hammers, raised a pole to strike him.

He dodged, ducked, following Fu. At last he reached the thin edge of the crowd! He ran for a side street after the flying end of Fu's coat and pigtail. The mob did not follow.

In the dark safety of the unfrequented alley they got their breath, wiped the blood from cuts on their hands and faces, and went cautiously forward.

"Fu, what did that woman say that started them off like that?" Eben demanded.

"Oh, she say Master bad man, makee plenty trouble. Master bring bad dragon to fight river dragon. Cost plenty money talkee honey word to dragon in river. Bulls plenty, rams plenty, cocks

plenty. She talkee 'strike, kill.' Chinawoman plenty bad temper. Always makee trouble," Fu added scornfully.

"Oh, I see," Eben flung back over his shoulder, "so you could not keep your mouth shut. Been talking in the tea-shops about my plans. You are a confounded fool."

Fu Ling Ting followed, "eating bitterness." He had saved Master's life. That was as it should be—duty of servant to master. But on top of it, Master made him lose face, accusing him of idle gossip. Such nonsense. The outside barbarian. Never learn the perfect custom. Proper servant inform the gaping rustics the wonders of his master.

They walked on in silence, choosing dark side streets, until they reached the city gate. Here Eben halted and looked into the narrow, dimly lighted passageway, tunneling the thick masonry of the wall. Congested into this bottle neck was a struggling mass of squeaking wheelbarrows, pack-donkeys, chairs, their owners all bent on getting through before the great doors were shut and locked for the night.

"I'll stand out like a lighthouse in that mess."

He pulled his hat low over his eyes, slid into the tunnel, hugging the masonry at the side, moving slowly from shadow to shadow. Then he hurried down the steps of the embankment, along the planks across the junks, to his own boat.

The men had gone to their feasting. The *laodah's* wife lay asleep in the front, fallen together in a

heap. From within Eben heard a low moaning. His heart rose in his throat. "Margaret," he cried, "what's the matter. Fu, get a light." In the flare of the candle he saw Margaret crouching in the corner. "Margaret, are you hurt?" he urged.

For a moment she gazed at him helplessly. "Oh, Eben," she gasped at last. "I've been so frightened."

Rage filled Eben's voice. "Now why did you want to scare me, taking on like that? Didn't I tell you you were all right?" he asked as he helped her up.

She opened his coat, pulling it around her and over her head, burrowing her head close against him. Glad she didn't see the cuts on my face, thought Eben. Time enough to tell her in the morning.

Later when they lay, each stretched on his own cot, Margaret started with every sound of the close-harbored humanity around her. "Eben, Eben." She roused him as he was dropping off to sleep. "Hear that woman calling. They're after us."

"Lie still, Margaret. Nobody's comin'."

Margaret shuddered.

"See, Fu is sitting outside. He'd tell us if anything was wrong." Eben spoke more gently now. "Fu, what's the woman saying?" he asked of the squatting figure in the prow.

"She talkee spirit come back. Just now have go top side." Still smarting over his humiliation, Fu answered laconically, pointing heavenward.

The night wore on.

"Fu, what is that wailing?" Margaret lifted her head, listening.

"Missie, that b'long dead man. He wife makee cry, *'ai, ai.'* He dead. River dragon takee."

Through the arch of the doorway Margaret saw shadow-hooded figures. "Fu, Fu," she whispered.

"Missie, that b'long nothing. B'long old woman come dead man boat, makee cry."

The last of the shadows moved on, mumbling, "My lily feet are smaller than yours. I go slowly, slowly." Soon from somewhere in the huddle of boats rose a mounting crescendo of keening wails. *"Ai! Ai!* The river dragon has taken him!"

Thud! Thud! The tom-toms driving back the evil spirits.

Louder! Louder! Force them back, force them back!

There they hover, in the air, in the river! Beat them back! back! back!

At last Margaret slept. But wide awake, Eben watched the huddled figure of Fu in the prow. "Damn them all." He was going up the river.

XV

FU contemplated the broad floor made by the prows of the junks extending to right and left of him. He did not approve this new pidgin of his master's. He, a Ningpo man, was out of his milieu up here—could not speak the dialect, only half understood it. Now in this matter of a boat to take

Master through the gorges. He was having to pay the *laodah,* who was acting as his middleman and interpreter, almost all he would make on the deal. Furthermore, the boatmen did not keep the perfect custom. They intended to fleece Master on the price. They were very angry with outside barbarians. They told Fu of one foreign devil, already living in the city, who had brought them a new God. It might do no harm to have another God, they admitted, but the foreign devil commanded them not to bow before the ancestors. That would bring vengeance upon the city. And now here came this new barbarian with a dragon that would anger the river dragon. At this point the boatman had doubled his price. Fu dared not tell his master how much, for fear he would accuse him of squeezing, thus making him lose face again. Indeed he ate bitterness. He wished to go home. But there was duty of servant to master. He sighed. "*Mei yu fatzu,* no way out."

XVI

UP early next morning, Eben made a great show of energy in order to make it plain to Margaret and Fu that he had no intention of giving in to them. First, he sent Fu off with a note to the American missionary up in the city, then he brought forth the maps Little had given him and studied them. After that, he wrote out a list of things he would

need on his trip. By this time, Fu had returned with an answer from the Reverend Mr. Foster, asking them to come to dinner that evening. He stuffed it in his pocket and consulted with Fu over the whaleback junk for his trip which he had told him to bargain for.

But along toward noon, everything he could think of had been done and, like Margaret, he sat on the side of his cot, caught suddenly by a sense of futility in all activity. The matter of going through the gorges, building a steamboat, conquering the savage river, did not seem impossible (opposition would have stirred him to combat), but of no importance. He felt angry, baffled by this heretofore unexperienced mood. Never in his life had he desired anything but restless movement, combat, achievement. He could not be angry with nothing, so he was angry with Margaret, sitting opposite him in a listless quiet. He was sure that it was she who had taken the temper out of his energy.

That it was this old country, into the very stronghold of which he had ventured, which had robbed him of his vitality, he would have scornfully denied. Neither would he have granted that lethargy, as well as energy, was contagious, that from the soul of this ancient people could flow an apathy clogging his energetic spirit like rust on machinery.

Last night he had seen hate jump forth from behind the indifferent mask of their yellow faces; but to-day he did not recognize this something, more subtle, which had reached out from them, weakening

him by absorbing him a little into their own spirit, just as they had absorbed all races who had conquered them, even the fierce Manchus who now sat upon the Dragon Throne, fierce no longer, effete. Eben did not know that for centuries men of the West who have set forth, ready to endure all hardships to carry away the treasures of the East, whether of silk and jade or the treasure of philosophy, have seldom come back with the spoils without leaving behind them something of themselves which they once valued. If any one had asked Eben how, even with his talisman of machinery, he was going to resist this race, so violent in its manifestations, so deadly still at its heart, he would have scoffed at the question.

Ah, at last he had it! He knew what was ailing him. It was this eternal waiting on Fu's bargaining. Rousing Fu Ling from his afternoon siesta, he insisted that he clinch the junk business this moment. Fu explained that his only chance of getting a junk at all lay in patient waiting. The bargain was progressing well now if they did not hurry it. But Eben insisted it be done at once. Fu Ling circled the junks, then returned, saying the old manager was up in the city.

"I could have told you before you sent Fu that you would not accomplish anything," Margaret began as soon as Fu had finished speaking. "If you'd listen to reason, you'd know you could not be energetic among people trained for centuries not to be." When her husband did not answer, she plucked at his

sleeve. "Eben, look at that great water-buffalo on the shore plunging along in the mud thinking he's going his own way. And see the little boy on his back making him do what he wants him to."

"Well, what of it?" asked Eben, inwardly glad she had found something beside himself to interest her.

"You're like the bull, Eben," she answered. "You just wait. You'll find out to your sorrow."

"Stop your silly talk," Eben roared at her. "You're crazy with the idea that these Chinamen are going to hurt us."

"Don't you dare speak to me like that." Margaret, now as angry as he, abandoned herself to reproaches and recriminations.

XVII

IT was time to go to the Reverend Mr. Foster's. Under cover of darkness Eben hurried Margaret along the planks and junk prows to the foreshore where three sedan chairs awaited. Fu had succeeded in getting these vehicles after much haggling. But even then it was at a figure thrice the customary price, with his own squeeze cut down to a minimum.

Margaret sat tense and uncomfortable on the narrow board seat of her chair, knees drawn up under her chin. Eben in another chair rode ahead

and Fu behind. Both had assured her that nothing could happen to her if she kept the curtains of her chair closely drawn. She did not believe them.

Street after street. Corners turned under the jut of the roofs, lights flaring up in her eyes from the torches of wayfarers, disclosing a yellow river of humanity, flowing down upon her, which seemed about to swamp the frail craft of her personality. Looking through a crack at the bottom of the curtain she saw the slimy stones of the street, the brown bare legs of her chairman twinkling back and forth, bespattered with mud, muscles distended doing the work of a horse.

Through the reserves of her race there penetrated in part the meaning of the far-off beat of the brazen drums, expressing primitive fear; the whining violins, sharp as pain, exciting the bride and groom, caught in the first brooding birth of adolescence, into days of abandoned passion in order that quickly there might be sons; the frantic clash of cymbals used by Taoist priests, defiled and degraded, pandering to men's lust. In the extremity of her disgust rose an abhorrence of Fu; in the extremity of her fear, she hated Eben because he subjected her to this experience.

Then on a last strident cry of the chairman a gate opened and, with a sickening swing into the air, a swoop earthward, a sharp jar, Margaret's chair was set down. She was at the home of the Reverend Mr. Foster.

XVIII

IN the little parlor they waited for the minister and his wife to come in. The austerity and quiet of the room reminded Margaret of the convent at Siccawei where she had spent so much of her childhood. Its peace began to slip over her. She remembered the faces of the nuns and, remembering, her terror receded. She began studying the room. Such an ugly little room, Margaret thought, in its poverty and bad taste. The walls were whitewashed, and on them hung three small gray prints—the Madonna, Christ before the Doctors, and the Crucifixion. In a small iron grate burned a meager fire. In the middle of the bare floor stood an oak table, on it a Bible and an oil lamp with a glass base and white shade. There were no curtains at the windows. The shutters outside had been closed, making black squares in the chalky walls. The one note of comfort in the room was a patent rocker standing near the fireplace; the only note of beauty, two Chinese chairs and a tea-table arranged in conventional native fashion against one wall. Two children's chairs, made of rounded bamboos, such chairs as could be bought on the street for a few coppers, stood one on each side of the table.

But the room's stillness, its cleanliness, were to Margaret like an oasis with a deep pool, after many

days of extreme thirst. She felt her self-control building up. When she glanced sidewise at Eben, sitting in one of the Chinese chairs, his elbow on the tea-table, his chin resting on his tightly-clenched fist, as she recalled the length they had gone to that afternoon in opposing one another, a hot flush spread over her face. Never in the years of her sheltered life had she given way to such ignominious anger. Well, she would find sanctuary here in this austere home of the missionaries. They were of her country, morally strict Puritan American, drilled into frugality of emotion. Here, she, child of the same stock, hard beset, would find retreat and expiate her primitive anger.

Mrs. Foster entered, explaining that she had been delayed at the chapel. She was shy and diffident, as if Margaret and Eben, who stood before her, belonged to a world she did not know or had forgotten. She spoke to them haltingly, as if even the language they used, although it was her own tongue, came to her with difficulty—it, too, half forgotten. She and the two children who hid behind her, peeping out, were dressed in native clothes. She looked shapeless and clumsy in the padded jacket and trousers, and suddenly embarrassed as she gazed at Margaret. Despite the limitations of the boat, Margaret had managed to be beautifully and fastidiously clad in a black dress with a little train, cut low in the neck, and without sleeves—the correct dinner dress of Shanghai. Mrs. Foster looked startled, then disapproving, for in the years she had sought to be-

come like the Chinese, she had come to feel, as they did, that to show the neck or arms was a disgrace like the unveiling of a Turkish woman. The children were too shy to do more than peep, and they spoke only Chinese. After the first greeting, no one spoke.

Then the Reverend Mr. Foster entered. Eben stared at him, too astonished to return his greeting. Somehow he hadn't expected to see the missionary done up in Chinese duds. But there he was in a long padded gown falling to his heels, his head shaved in the front according to custom, and the rest of his dark-brown hair drawn tightly back, heavily oiled, and braided into a queue, the black tassel hanging below his waist.

Mrs. Foster led them immediately across a cold entry-way to the dining-room.

Eben was uncomfortable, for the Reverend Mr. Foster very evidently did not approve of his scheme. He talked carefully, trying not to offend, for he must lead up to the arrangement he hoped to make about Margaret. She would be better off if he might leave her here in the house of the missionaries while he explored the gorges. But, in spite of his efforts, toward the end of the dinner he and the parson came to grips in an argument.

"Why should you spend your time putting steamboats on the river when these people are facing eternal damnation?" the Reverend Mr. Foster challenged him.

Margaret thought, "He looks the way Eben looks when he talks about his boats."

"But," protested Eben, "somebody's got to do this steamboat business in the world and earn money for you fellows. Everybody can't just sit down and talk about salvation. Besides, the good Lord wouldn't send these Chinamen to hell just because they don't know any better than to bow down to a stone image."

" 'I am a jealous god. I will have no other gods before me,' " quoted the missionary.

It was very quiet in the dining-room after these words, the only sound the tiny tap of the plates set down by the Chinese servant on the table-cloth, which had no pad under it. Margaret felt that she and her husband were drifting farther and farther from the missionaries. If she spoke, asking them for their help in her extreme need, they would not be able to hear her, although they all sat close around the table in the yellow light of the lamp, which shone down on the fair heads of the silent children and the black leather-covered Bible lying on the white cloth by the side of the Reverend Mr. Foster. He had read to them at the beginning of the meal, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." His voice had been beautiful then—not at all the voice in which he had just spoken. Suddenly, in a flash, Margaret saw that the two men were alike—each made hard and unyielding by the fervor of their vision.

Eben shifted uneasily in his chair, crossing and uncrossing his legs under the table. Finally he blurted out, "I'll be damned if I can see what kind of a

God you are makin' Him out, anyway!" Excitedly he drew his pipe from his pocket and started to light it.

The Reverend Mr. Foster rose. "You can't bring your filthy tobacco here, nor an evil tongue. In this home we do not question the way of our God." His lips trembled. "I'd like it better if you left."

"What," cried Eben, "after you've invited us, you'd put us out on account of a pipe—up here where there ain't any other white folks, where there are just Chinamen for thousands and thousands of miles!"

"Just a pipe! I came here to convert these poor heathen. I labored for ten years before I got my first convert. I've taught them that smoking and drinking are wicked. Now you, one of my own countrymen, come . . ." His voice broke.

The two men faced each other in complete misunderstanding. Once their dreams had been locked together in one man—pioneer and religious enthusiast—who had settled America. Now Eben despised the work of the minister and the minister looked with the wrath he felt God would have on this man who sought material things.

Eben glanced around the room where they stood, in the circle of lamp light. He thought Mrs. Foster had drawn away from Margaret—Margaret, who was goodness itself. He was too angry to speak as he led Margaret out. The servants were peering at them from the entry-way, and from around the

corners of the house and the gatehouse he was conscious of enigmatic eyes set in inscrutable broad flat faces.

XIX

EBEN looked out angrily over the curtain in the front of his chair. Suddenly the heavy guffaw of his laughter echoed through the silent street. It startled Margaret and enraged her that he could be laughing in the midst of such catastrophe. But, anyway, he'd have to take her back to Shanghai now. Why had she not realized that before?

Relieved by his laughter, Eben began to ponder. How had it all happened, anyway? He had not intended to quarrel with the parson, any more than he had meant to get into that fracas with the Chinese coolies the night before. Certainly he had not, for he had wanted the missionaries to take Margaret for the winter. Strange forces working up here. Chinaman hated the white man; white man, he guessed, despised the Chinaman, with his slow ways never changing, running his junks just as he had done for thousands of years; and the missionary hating him, and he despising the missionary. And here were Margaret and himself, kind of hating each other too over this river business, each standing in the other's way. Well, anyway, there was nothing to do now but for Margaret to go up the gorges with him. That, the missionary had settled for them.

They had come to the Bund. Down below in its cavern flowed the river, in whose careless keeping lay the fate of them all. After a final noisy argument over the wine money which Fu paid them, the chairmen went back into the city. "Come, Margaret," said Eben, and led her down the steps toward the river. On the hundreds of junks the matting hoods were closely drawn now. Huddled together under them, slept the junk people, waiting to go up the rapids. Some among them to-morrow night, Eben knew, would be sleeping in the yellow ooze at the bottom of the river. "Umph," he said to himself, "guess maybe the river is the best hater of us all." He laughed sardonically as they started single file along the road of planks leading to their junk.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Margaret.

"Well, I don't either, now I come to think of it," answered Eben. "Especially for you, for I guess it means you'll have to go along with me for the winter. Don't see any other way for it."

They were inside the junk now. "What," cried Margaret, wheeling around in the passageway between their cots, "live like this for months? You are crazy, Eben. Oh, I could not. Please, Eben, don't make me."

For hours after they were in bed they argued over it, to the slapping accompaniment of water on the junk's bottom. Finally Margaret turned her face toward the matting side of the boat, Eben's last words ringing in her ears—"I mean to go up the river and you are coming along. Your pa didn't

give in to your ma, and I don't intend to give in to you." She felt dishonored by their anger, and horribly confused. How had it happened—that all Eben's strength which once was her protection was now used against her?

The man lay looking out through the arch-like opening of the junk, a wind out of the west blowing in his face. He was going to fling his strength, augmented by the strength of machinery, against the power of the river and these people, making their power puny. His dreams purified his anger.

XX

FOR six weeks their struggle with the savage upper river had gone on and still they had traversed only an odd two hundred miles of the surging torrent. Eben had made the mistake of taking a large junk in order to give Margaret more comfort, but it had lengthened out the time of their journey enormously. At times, in shallow stretches, they had to keep far out in the river, which increased the difficulties; the lengthened towing ropes tangled more easily than the shorter ones of the little boats. These smaller craft could hug the shore, go along quickly, and their towing ropes, fastened to their lower masts, could be carried under the ones of the big junks like Eben's.

Too, their great weight made the scraping of the

rocks more dangerous. Despite the larger sum paid by Eben in order that the junk should be lightly cargoed, the *laodah,* counting on his inexperience, had taken more freight than was safe in order that he might make a little extra money. So the journey had been slower than Eben had ever dreamed it was possible to travel. Sometimes at evening they were in sight of the self-same boulder they had confronted in the morning, although usually at the end of the day they looked at it from a different angle. Eben did not fret too much at the delay for it gave him time to study the treacherous tricks of the river which would be the undoing of a steamer.

If it had not been for Margaret, Eben would have been happier than he had ever been in his life. The violence of the scene brought him fierce joy. His blood sang in his veins. Day after day he scrambled along the shore among the trackers, notebook in hand, jotting down the position of the rapids, banks of sand or shingle reefs, boulders, land-slides, rock ledges. Where there was no foothold along the shore, the cliffs rising straight up, he squatted in the prow of the junk between the poling men, peering down into the whirligigs of rapids and the course of treacherous currents. At night, by the light of a candle stuck in its own grease, he painstakingly drew his maps. He could not sleep, filled with a mighty exaltation as he imagined how his steamer was going to look charging into the rapids.

But whenever he looked at Margaret, his exaltation oozed away. If she'd only get angry with him,

as she had done at first, he would argue with her. Or if she'd be afraid, the way she used to be, he could have scolded her or petted her.

Day after day she sat within the hooded space in the middle of the great boat, out of the way of the drummer and the poling men—augmented now from the two on the lower river to twenty—wearing an old coat of his, her arms folded deep in the sleeves for warmth, staring straight ahead of her, never speaking.

But worst of all, she'd lost her beauty. What would the old tea merchant have said to that? He'd been so proud of her golden hair, her eyes, which he said were the color of gentians. Her hair now lay close to her scalp like damp corn silk; her eyes seemed actually to have faded to a flat, lifeless blue; and her skin had lost its cameo whiteness.

He felt resentful, as if she had done it purposely to put him in the wrong, reproaching him for his broken promise to her father.

XXI

ONE thing Eben had not noticed—how careless Margaret had grown about herself. But Fu had noticed it. One day when she had not taken the trouble to comb her hair, he divined that his moment had come; she would listen to him. Without losing face, without destroying duty of servant to

master, he saw a way by which he might go home. He came and stood by her chair, saying: "Missie, I think you little sick. More better you go Shanghai side. I takee you."

For a moment Margaret roused herself. What was it Fu was saying? Always he had been a little against her, like a jealous dog. He'd take her back? That meant he was on her side now. Ah, it was too late. She feared as much to go back as to go on.

Fu Ling stood a long time waiting for Margaret to answer. But at last, as she did not, he turned away. Too hasty. A little more patience. And, too, it would be wisdom to lessen his duties of servant to Missie. Over small things, like eggs holding the young chicken, these outside barbarians lost their endurance. Then to-morrow, or after four to-morrows, he would speak again.

XXII

DAYS passed. Margaret did nothing. All day she sat, unconscious of the majestic beauty around her: the sun at midday illuminating the yellow surface of the river; the rock walls rising on either side of her to a prodigious height, their surfaces broken by huge slanting slabs of rock, standing out like giant sounding-boards in colossal cathedrals; the impressive gloom when the narrow defile of the river lay in shadow and even the largest junk

was dwarfed to a tiny skiff by the overtopping cliffs.

Inactive in the midst of all the activity, in a torment of soul, having lost long ago even the ability to pray, she knew only that their junk, jostled by hundreds of other junks, marched up the river to do battle with death.

She no longer shrank from the blood sacrifice which the boatmen offered to propitiate the evil spirits before entering each dangerous rapid. In the beginning, disgust and nausea swept over her when the cocks, squawking and protesting, were carried to the prow of the boat, their heads wrenched off and thrown to the angry demon in the river and the odor of the warm blood reached her as it was sprinkled on the door-frame at her side. Once she had even reached out her hand to stay them, shrinking away in terror when the usually genial boatmen turned upon her with a snarl.

But all that was over now. Apathetically she watched the sacrifice; listened to the frantic beating of the drums; saw, unmoved, the naked poling men leaping into the air with their iron-shod poles, flinging their naked breasts upon them, forcing the boat forward, their savage cries slitting the air—*"Hi-ee, hi-ee"*—drowning the roar of the torrent, the everlasting *wash-wash* of the waters against the junk's sides.

Terrible to go on. Terrible to go back alone with Fu over the tortuous way they had come. And Eben . . . Margaret was afraid to be disobedient to Eben. Still, gradually Fu's words and others he

spoke later let a ray of hope into her despair.

Then all at once one rainy morning as she sat watching Eben hurriedly eating his breakfast, she found that her endurance was at an end. The eggs Fu had placed before her seemed the last straw—the eggs had been bad so often of late. Why should she accept this intolerable way of life just because Eben wished it?

If she refused to go farther, Eben could not make her go. Even he would not use force, and she had Fu Ling to help her. For Eben's heart's desire, she cared not a whit. All her love for him was burnt out by his cruel indifference to her during these weeks. Her heart was bitter toward him. She wanted to get away from him almost as much as she wanted to get away from this horrible life.

"Eben," she said very quietly.

The man looked up.

"Eben," she said again. "You can do as you please, but I am going back to Shanghai."

"You can't go alone, and I won't go with you," he answered impatiently.

"Fu is going with me, Eben."

He laid down his fork and stared at her. How'd she get Fu on her side? With his help, she'd be able to make the arrangements about a boat and he could not prevent her. So Fu had gone over to her. With his back toward her, he spoke. "Of course if you take that attitude, there's nothing for me to do but to go with you. What I do afterward will be my own business."

He got up, putting on a Chinese raincoat of cocoanut fiber, and went out.

XXIII

EBEN did not come back at noon, but walked on and on in the drizzle. To Margaret the day seemed interminable, with only the rain, growing heavier, falling on the water. She felt broken and forsaken. So this was what that marriage, conceived in such joy and abandonment in the garden in Shanghai, had brought her. Whom had she to turn to? Her father was dead. Eben had failed her. God? There was no God!

The smooth floor of civilization on which all her life she had walked without thinking of what lay beneath had suddenly given way. Through great openings she looked into terrifying chasms, seeing the ruthlessness of existence, its grim tragedy. In the place of the old comfortable feeling given her by the nuns, who taught her that the very hairs on her head were numbered, had come a gasping realization of how careless life was of the individual. Eben, strutting with self-importance, believing that he could master this river with his paltry machinery, was preposterous. Of course the river would destroy them, as it did the yellow men.

From her brain she could not shut out the picture of the trackers high on the thin towing paths, one moment pulling among their fellows on the towing

ropes, the next suddenly lurching forward, clutching wildly at the cliff, their hands slipping from the hard rocks, hurtling down to the river, dragged under, more bodies to lie contorted and broken in the yellow ooze at the bottom of the river. Or cables breaking, junks swirling round like spinning tops, sucked in like the foam of the rapids, yellow hands—men, women, children—reaching up in an imploring gesture, voices crying, *"Chiu ming, chiu ming,* save life, save life." No mercy from the river. None from God.

XXIV

AT last Fu succeeded in rousing her from her bitter reverie, asking her about the packing. She went inside to help him, then sat down on her cot, immersed again in her thoughts, forgetful of what she had come to do. She was so absorbed that she did not realize, until Eben stepped heavily down beside her, that the junk had pulled up alongshore. As he began taking off his shoes and rolling up his trouser leg, he vouchsafed: "One of those *wonks* bit me the other day. It's swelling. Those dogs seem to have an incurable hatred for foreigners," he added, jerking viciously at his wet woolen stocking. "Fu," he shouted, "where in the devil are you? Bring me some hot water. Hurry."

Margaret's eyebrows drew together in disdain

over the succeeding vituperation her husband poured out on his faithful servant.

Eben lay down on his cot and turned his face to the wall. Sitting as still as an image, only her brain seeming alive, Margaret listened to Fu haranguing the junkman and the trackers. The rain was increasing, and they insisted on tying up alongshore, refusing to go farther that day now that the lash of Eben's presence was removed.

Silence fell over the boat except for the beat of the rain on the roof so close above her head. By and by Eben began to mutter to himself, but Margaret paid no attention. She felt only bitter disdain for him. After bullying her for weeks, now he was trying to work on her sympathies! Suddenly she remembered the bite. Eben was delirious. A cold fear gripped her.

They were days away from any doctor. Suppose Eben should die here in the boat. Of course he would die. She had discovered that an individual life did not count. God, the Father, was a lie. Eben would die and lie stiff under the blankets and she would be alone. A feeling of mad despair swept over her. She was a tiny suffering atom lost among millions upon millions of men who laughed when they saw death, setting their faces in the stiff mask of a grin.

She looked at Eben's leg. It had swollen to an enormous size. She tried to think what she must do. The word "cauterize" seemed to float up out of her mind, submerged in despair. She called Fu, and with

his help performed a rude kind of surgery, feeling faint and sick over it, all the time seeing against the red sore her own long, white finger protruding, attentuated and wraithlike from the large cuffs of Eben's coat which she was wearing. Then she sat down, a candle near Eben's head, watching his great form under the blankets bulked against the boat's side.

Night came, the rain increased. It drubbed, drubbed on the hollow drum of the boat, and she could hear the wind driving it in swishing sheets against the water. She could hear the junkmen, as they lay naked, half-covered by their clothes, in every conceivable place in the junk, snoring and sighing in their sleep, and Eben muttering odd bits out of his old life—words, commands at sea, scraps of sentences, about his accident, his discharge, the river, boats, boats, boats, steamboats, the river.

Morning, and still the rain and the sullen men and Eben's mutterings. And night again. Four days and nights. It was intolerable, so she called to God, even though she knew he was not there to hear. But she must call upon some one. Oh, she did not hate Eben. She loved him. Loved him with a consuming passion that would make her destroy herself to give him life, happiness. "Oh, God," she prayed, "don't let him die and I'll give him what he wants."

The fifth night wore on toward morning. The rain still drummed on the roof, and went swishing by her on the river. She must have dozed, for she

was startled by Eben's voice, natural now, "Have I been sick, Margaret?"

"Days! It seems forever. And the junkmen would not work," Margaret told him between sobs. "But, oh, Eben, you need not go back." She fell on her knees by his side, her head bowed, her arms laid across him, hands clasped. "Oh, I was so frightened."

Eben stroked her hair awkwardly. "You are a silly. But do you mean it, about going on?"

"Yes," answered Margaret faintly.

"You're fine, Margaret," whispered Eben, and then louder in matter-of-fact tones, "Just hand me my maps and I'll show you how really sensible my scheme is. And Margaret, I promise you as soon as we get back to Ichang I'll build you a house. I've got my eye on a spot of land that looks both up and down the river. You can watch me when I start out in my steamer."

He lay silent, his hands folded over his maps, an almost childlike expression on his face.

"I'll tell you, Margaret, you can plan the house just as you want it," he volunteered. "Only, of course," he cautioned her, "the first floor will have to be good for offices. Let's see, we've got about three weeks now. Going up, I want to stay at Chungking, looking over the ground there. I think that letter from Liu to the magistrate will make that possible. A week to slip down the rapids. That'll bring us back into Ichang sometime in February, around China New Year. China New Year is late

this year. Well, as soon as that is over, I'll see what I can do about a house. Take a Chinese place while we are building, and you can send to Shanghai for pretty fixings."

Silence fell between them, broken at last by Eben, speaking with a show of magnaminity, but some reticence: "You know, Margaret, when I was at sea I was wantin' children when you wanted to wait. . . . Well, I don't mind anymore."

"Oh," said Margaret, in a small, thin voice as if it were drained of her last bit of hope, "I . . . I have changed, too. I . . . I thought perhaps they'd help. I don't know—be a comfort perhaps."

"Well, look here," said Eben, "I thought I was telling you something you'd like, and here you are saying you've changed your mind. . . . The interior is no place for children," he added, a little defiance creeping into his words.

"Never mind," said Margaret faintly. She sat silent. The first light of day crept in through the front of the boat. To love Eben was as devastating as hate. But Eben held her hand in his.

"Fu," he called out, "tell the *laodah* to get going."

With groans and grunts, the trackers got into their coats, lowered their naked legs into the cold water, unfurling their towing ropes. They pushed off. The junk moved slowly up river.

Part II

Struggle

I

IT was seven years since Eben Hawley had set out to conquer the river. High above the winter water-level, outside the city wall of Ichang, on the Street of Perpetual Happiness, stood his house, tall and narrow, four stories high, tiered about with verandas, two rooms to a floor, except the first; that was one large room, designed to be used as a godown. Built of red brick, with a corrugated tin roof, it stood up boldly above the thatched huts along the quay, dwarfing them and exaggerating its own height. In turn, it should have been dwarfed by the city wall and the jumbled magnificence of the mountains behind. But it was not. It dominated the scene.

Eben had built it, even as he had willed to do, after Margaret and he returned from their trip through the gorges. But only now was his dream of a steamer coming true. Now at last, down on the sand spit, well above the river at this low water mark, the hull of his steamer stood upon stilt-like ways. A little beauty she was going to be, after the pilot-house was finished and the machinery installed, a ship a man could be proud of.

Through February, Eben paced back and forth on the foreshore, the crest of his iron-gray hair

blowing in the wind, watching the caulkers that they did not skimp on the hemp they drove into the seams of the hull or on the chenam with which they covered them. To the accompaniment of the soft thud of the hammers on the hemp, walking back and forth, whittling a peg or a stake, he thought about all that had happened.

There was the time five years before when China, after her war with Japan, had by treaty agreed that the city of Chungking should be opened to foreign trade. That had thrown the upper river open to foreign ships. Then Eben had been certain his countrymen would believe in his project. But when he sought to organize a company among them, they replied that no one could take a steamer through the rapids of the upper river, and that the good faith of the Chinese had not been proven.

For a time Archibald Little had seemed to drop out of existence. Everything was at a deadlock until two years ago Little himself, in a steamer built especially for the rapids, had steamed into sight out of the Tiger Teeth Gorge below Ichang and dropped anchor right in line with Eben's house. Hope had sprung again in Eben's heart. But immediately, despite the treaties, Little began having trouble with the officials. In a despatch they informed him that they could not let him run his steamer up to Chungking, the great trade mart of Szechuan. Wild monkeys in the gorges might throw stones upon the steamer and injure Mr. Little. Their thoughtful care forebade them letting him attempt it.

"Imagine making a fool of a man like this," said Mr. Little with a dry laugh. "It's an insult to my intelligence to put me off with talk of wild monkeys. Did they think for a moment I would believe them? I've half a mind to tell them I'm going anyway. How can they prevent me? The river, by treaty, is open to trade."

"Why don't you?" Eben had asked. "You've tried everything else and it has failed. Why not try that?"

And Little had done so and lo! the mesh of difficulties had disappeared. The officials had only been trying to bluff him. They knew he had the right on his side.

Brave and foolhardy Little, the first to steam into the worst rapids in the world. Yes, Little had been ahead of him, was living up there beyond the gorges in Chungking right now, writing books about it.

After Little's success, Eben had again tried to interest his countrymen, but this time they said the anti-foreign feeling was growing since the little emperor had tried to introduce Western reforms.

"Shucks on the anti-foreign feeling," stormed Eben. If you waited for that to die out, you would never start. Didn't he know how deep-rooted it was? Hadn't he been stoned and spit upon times without number? Only as you worked with these Chinamen, broke down their suspicions by being with 'em, showing 'em you were all right, would the hatred die out. Look at Liu and Fu and the people of Ichang. He could go anywhere now in the city. But

the shipping men would not believe. "Tame cats," he called them. But now he was going to show them.

A German named Hoffman had offered to go in with him. Had just walked in on him one day, as unheralded as if he had dropped from the sky. For several years he had been an engineer on one of the lower river steamers, and had become interested in the upper river hearing the shipping men discuss it as they went back and forth to Shanghai. Of course he could do nothing on an engineer's salary. But recently an old aunt of his back in Germany had died and left him some money and he proposed to take a gamble on the upper river if he could join with Eben. He was due any day now. He had been to Germany to settle up the estate and purchase the engines.

Eben's heart swelled with pride as he walked up the steps of the Bund, along the Street of Perpetual Happiness to his house, to Margaret, who troubled him no more with vain pleadings, although for most of those seven years she had made him uneasy. She had had a habit of standing in the window looking down-river with a kind of frozen look on her face, and at night she'd sit in the farthest corner of the room, as if she were hiding. He always told himself he had made her comfortable, just as he had promised her father. And built her the house just as he had told her he would, though he needed the money. And hadn't she always had Fu to look after things? He had never yet forced her to do any work. Her hands were as white as the day he married

her. If the tea merchant would step out of his grave, he'd show him. The old man had nothing on him.

However, all those years Margaret remained lifeless, haggard, without beauty. But now, as mysteriously as it had left her, beauty had come back. Although he did not understand it, it completed his happiness. No longer was his house a silent and dead place. High at its top a revivified Margaret moved about. And into the depths of the house he was at last putting a heart-beat. Bustle and excitement all day now around the tall house, through the tall house. The warehouse was to be on the ground floor, the offices above.

Mr. Liu had come up from Hankow to be Eben's comprador—the middleman between him and the Chinese—and to manage the office while Eben captained the steamer and Hoffman ran its engines. Mr. Liu sat at a large oak desk in the front office, looking as exotic as a pomegranate blooming in the streets of New York in his plum-colored satin coat, lined with fox's fur, his hair braided into a long, thick queue, drawn tightly back from his broad, flat face, the expression of which never changed, no matter what happened. On his head was a black satin skullcap with a red button. Especially exotic did he look in comparison with Eben hurrying about in an old suit, sometimes in his shirt-sleeves if he had been inspecting the hull of his ship.

But Fu made up for his master. He was almost as grand as Mr. Liu, only his coat was lined with curly black astrakan. And the composure of his features

was as perfect as Mr. Liu's. No slightest sign of pleasure shown in his inexpressive, glassy black eyes, with the lids never fully raised, nor played about his long heavy lips, betraying his satisfaction that he had ensconced himself as office-boy and that his master was a *typan*.

These years had been hard indeed for Fu, but his features had never betrayed that fact either, although he had been at some difficulty to keep a proper amount of face among these country louts in Ichang, enough face so he could stay with Master and Missie. Here in the interior where his fellow-countrymen knew not the ways of the world as they did in Shanghai, he was looked down upon for serving a foreigner. And then, too, the family had not done things with the proper display of dignity. At times he had to add a little money of his own, all unbeknown to the Missie, to save all their faces.

But now things were beginning to be as they should. He was very formal with these Chinese who came to the office to see Mr. Liu. Getting his face back. Also, he was figuring that the house could stand a little more squeeze on his part now. He'd be able to recoup himself for those extras in the way of face he had given to the family. Those candles, for instance, he had offered at the temple because Missie was so stiff-necked about such things. But they had been worth it, for there was every indication that at last there was to be an heir in the household. Thus the sin unpardonable would be averted.

II

MARGARET believed once more in the mercy of God. He had given her a sign. He was stronger than Eben! He was stronger than the river! She knew again that the very hairs of her head were numbered. This child that was coming was the manifestation of God's forgiveness and love. It was of no consequence now that Eben did not want a child. It was as if she rested on a broad stream of love which was carrying her toward a harbor of bliss. Now if she stood for a moment at the window, looking down on the narrow winter river, the hull of the steamer, and Eben, a small figure down there moving restlessly back and forth, an exultant sense of power sang in her veins. God had made her stronger than them all—all three of them: her husband, the boat, the river. She alone could create. She was giving to the house a heartbeat. Her own heart almost suffocated her when she felt the stir of life within her.

One day, looking in the glass, she was transfixed by her own beauty. Her eyes were again like the deepest gentians; her soft, fine hair broke in waves around her face. The cameo clearness of her small features had come back. Then she looked at her clumsy woolen dress, which had become frayed where it touched the floor. Over it, to keep her warm, for with their tiny fireplaces the rooms were cold, she

was wearing a padded jacket such as the Chinese use. She noticed the padding protruded around the arms. As she tried to hold her arms so the holes would not show, a blush spread over her face and down into her neck.

That very day she sent Fu to buy her rolls of silk and a Chinese fur garment. With the help of a sew-sew *amah* she made herself a dress of deep blue silk with a train, and a robe of the same blue, and with the fur Fu had bought her, the bits of white in squirrels' pelts sewn painstakingly together, she lined the robe. Often she walked down the long straight flight of stairs which led from her chamber to the drawing-room, simply in order to hear the *frou-frou* of her train falling from step to step, like delicate joy trailing behind her. So long she had gone up those stairs with fears pursuing her: the river; famine, people crying at the gates, holding up their begging bowls, crowding the Street of Perpetual Happiness; cholera, people moaning outside the gate. The God of her childhood grown weak and powerless; the great house, with the two empty first floors, her home above, empty too; the empty idle years, with nothing to fill them but loneliness and impending evil. Now she listened to her silken train and loved God.

After the servants had done up her room in the morning, she would lock the door, then take her sewing from a little safe Eben had given her. She had learned needlework at the convent. But in those seven years she had scarcely touched her needle.

Now she wanted to sew all day. The pile of little garments was fit for a king. When she finished each small garment, before she laid it in the safe on top of a growing pile, she would spread it on the bed and fondle it, imagining the soft little body which it would some day clothe. Yet she was in no hurry for her child to be born. She wanted it there within her, its weight dragging on her. As the child grew stronger, her sensuous pleasure increased. Sleepless at night, she would lie high on her pillows, waiting to feel the imperious movement within her.

Thus absorbed, she was hardly conscious that the tide of life was at last sweeping up into this backwater—that she was not to be alone up here any more. Mr. Hoffman, on his return from Germany, was to stop in Shanghai to be married. On the Street of Perpetual Happiness, he had rented a low Chinese house and prepared for his bride.

Also, there was talk of two or three shipping companies sending representatives to Ichang. The middle river had been brought under the power of steam, and Ichang henceforth was to be the farthest outpost of trade. The white people were now prophesying that in the future it would be a rich and great trading center.

III

THE city no longer rejected Eben, no longer stoned him, no longer thought of him as grotesque, an albino. His skin was tawny. The *Lao Hu,* the

"Great Tiger," they called him. When he went into the city to buy lumber and nails on the "Big Street" with its jutting roofs, the women sitting in the open huts still pointed to him, but not with fear. As they sat there with their baby sons dressed in blue trousers and red or blue top-coats, sucking at their yellow breasts, they would say, "Eat and grow big like the Great Tiger." They looked with admiration on the unattainable strength of Eben, then down at the babes, and at their feet clad in the splendid yellow-tiger shoes with red embroidered mouths, bristling whiskers, upstanding cloth ears.

The men watched Eben pass and put him into their songs. Four men stood upon a half-made wall, tramping down the mud between the scaffolding of bamboo poles. As they beat the earth, they sang:

> *"Ah-ai-ah, ai-ah, ah-ai-ah,*
> The tiger, the tiger, the tiger,
> *Ta-amp, ta-amp,*
> He passes, he passes."

Four men trotted down the Street of Perpetual Happiness; a great tree trunk for a mast swung from bamboo poles resting on their shoulders.

> *"Eee-yah, eee-yah,*
> The tiger, the tiger,
> He is angry, he is angry,
> *Eee-yah, eee-yah,*
> He limps, he limps,
> *Eee-yah, eee-yah,*
> The pole is nearly perfect, but the tiger wants it
> perfect,

The tiger is angry,
He goes licking his chops,
Silly tiger."

For years, all through the city, rich men and poor had discussed Eben endlessly over their tea-cups—his fire-boats, his misfortunes. Why did he not put away the ugly one in his house and take another who would give him sons? What was that big house for if not for wives and concubines and many sons? The gods must despise him. *Ai-yah!* He was disgraced before them.

But now the townsfolk praised him. Their women had seen Fu Ling Ting's candles in the Temple of Numerous Children. Surely a man-child, a man-child. They put the *Lao Hu's* glory in their songs.

Only the scholars and officials were not reconciled. He broke the perfect pattern, trespassed in the perfect land.

IV

ALL night Margaret had been in travail. At the side of her bed sat a physician, come from a mission hospital over against the west wall of the city. Many times during the long hours he took hold of Margaret's hand and strength passed into her. After he let go she seemed still to feel the help of his rough, cracked hands. When the pain receded, she lay watching the missionary doctor sitting in the

lamp-light. Slowly in her mind the idea of God, the Father, rebuilt itself. That brooding compassion in the doctor's face made God's love for her tangible; God, who for so many years had been hidden from her. He sat bending forward, his hands folded between his knees. Such beautiful, tender hands, but so strangely scarred, as if they had suffered with the suffering. God suffering too when she suffered? Perhaps. The doctor was speaking.

"I am sorry my hands are rough. I wash them in boiling water instead of disinfectant," he said in explanation. "The money I save. . . . There is so much need of it. Women . . . little girls . . . their babies. Ah, life is cruel in this city . . . to women."

In her pain, Margaret saw the women of the city, not distinctly, but as a procession, vague and shadowy, forming a river like the real one flowing down there below her; a river growing wider, replenished constantly by the sacrifice of these women, a yellow flood in which she and her child not yet born were to be submerged, sucked down in the undertow. . . . Then she forgot them in travail.

The lamp's flame paled in the dawn coming through the windows, as with one last cry of anguish Margaret gave birth to her child. Deeper and deeper she felt herself slipping toward oblivion. Far away from some other world she heard Eben's voice, a clarion ring of pride in it, saying, "Margaret, we've got the finest boy you ever saw."

She was too weak to speak. Just vaguely conscious that some one moved her arm and laid some-

thing there between it and her heart. Exultant joy leaped up within her, drowning her in its ecstasy. She was as strong as God! She had made a man! She would guard him with her strength. Childish play, what Eben had been doing. He could not create a man, only a boat. Why had she ever bowed to his will? She heard at her side a feeble bleating. She felt as if her arms stretched out, her hands, palms outward, pushing back evil. The river held far away. Ecstatic moment!

Just then Fu appeared with a cup of tea which no one had ordered for her. With the opening of the door, a French window sucked inward and the faint sounds of the river rose to a roar. The raising of anchor chains, the fall of anchors on the decks, the shout of the *laodahs* calling for a wind transcended the wail of the new-born child.

V

THAT very day the machinery for the steamer arrived. Eben, down on the foreshore, going over the hull of his steamer for the hundredth time, sighted Hoffman's junk coming up-river, floating the German flag. Margaret heard the impatient jerk of her husband's dragging foot as he came along the passageway outside of her room. Had something gone wrong?

"The engines for the steamer, they're here!" he cried, bursting into the room.

Down the hall again went his uneven step. Down the stairs. Then utter silence in the house. A half-hour, an hour. The sound of the bar being slipped on the gate. The slam of the outside door, the rumble of voices far down at the bottom of the house, then drawing near. Mr. Hoffman's heavy bass, her husband's clearer tones, and suddenly, above them both, the voice of a woman. Then the chant of the carrying coolies coming into the compound with the heavy machinery—great blasts of rhythm expelled from their lungs drowning out all else.

Suddenly Margaret realized that a tide of fresh life was sweeping up the backwater where she had dwelt so long—a backwater full of black and strange growths. She could scarcely bear the thought. She was not prepared.

"Vell, vell, Frau Hawley, de leetle man iss here and de machinery and my vife. It iss goot," Hoffman's voice boomed from the doorway.

From the big bed at the other end of the small room she watched them advance toward her—Eben, Hoffman, and a small brown woman like a wren. Brown clothes, brown hair, brown skin, brown eyes—the color of a wren's—and swift darting movements. She clasped Margaret's hand and kissed her, saying in short, little sentences, emphasized here and there like the sharp peckings of a bird:

"I'm so *glad* I'm here. . . . Isn't it *nice?*"

Eben stood at the foot of her bed, lifting the baby so all might see, doing it gingerly and looking

absurdly pleased. Every one seemed strangely exaggerated to Margaret in her weakness. The baby so tiny, Eben so tall, and Hoffman so broad, nudging him in the ribs and exclaiming:

"Now how about all de talk about de middle of China no blaze for the kinder. Look at de vife. No longer de sad look."

Eben looked at her, not through her, as he had for so many years, seeing her really. Mrs. Hoffman darted into the group, taking the baby from Eben, exclaiming in a shocked tone: "No place for one—place for ten! And then they can be happy playing together. My mother said that, when she went to Shanghai away from all her people in Macao."

Hoffman surveyed her fondly. "Yes, de mutter iss von fine voman, so beeg, so jolly."

Fu came in with the *amah* he had sent for to his home-town on the coast, who had come up with the Hoffmans. He wanted to display her to Missie. Then Margaret saw that Eben was growing impatient. He walked the floor nervously, glancing out of the window into the courtyard where stood the new engine for the steamer. Hoffman noticed too, and said:

"Vell, vell, ve leave de vomen and look at de engine."

Mrs. Hoffman sat down on Margaret's bed hushing the baby.

"You would not cry now if my mother had you," she crooned over him. "The *nicest* lap she has, Mrs. Hawley, and *breasts*, too. Babies don't like thin

women like me and you. You should see the grandchildren when my mother takes them. A little whimper, then a sigh like a puppy settling down into a soft bed. We Portuguese women are all like that when we grow older. We'd feel dishonored to remain thin like virgins. I mean to be like her so babies will like me."

Margaret had not had a chance to speak yet, but she insisted now. "Give him to me." And then with a little wistful sigh: "I wish I'd had him before, but we thought it was no place for children. And then . . . then this baby just came, and already he's changed everything. I used to feel so . . . so barren up here all alone, no women, no children. So unnecessary."

"Of course, of course," Maraquita broke in. "Don't mind what the men say. My mother knows. You should see our house in Shanghai, all running over with children. Ten of us, now all married, and twenty grandchildren already. We are great settlers, we Portuguese. I'm going to have babies as fast as I can. That's the way to do when you go away from home."

On, on, hardly stopping, women's talk. Margaret forgot her reserve, the thoughts of seven years flooding over the dam. What did it matter that Mrs. Hoffman was from the Honkew district of Shanghai, not the aristocratic part from which she came? The years on the river had washed away such distinctions.

"No garden? Oh, but you *must*. It's *easy!*" exclaimed Mrs. Hoffman.

"It does seem so now. . . . I'm going to have one this year."

"I brought plenty of seeds. I'll give you some. Beans, tomatoes. . . . We'll have to raise them for the men to take on their trips."

"Have you brought corn?" asked Margaret. "We are New Englanders, you know, even if we have been a long time away from home."

At last the men started down to dinner and Maraquita with them. Maraquita, indeed! Eben stamped down the stairs ahead of Mrs. Hoffman. He resented a little this early familiarity—calling each other by their first names—but he liked the feel of life and warmth in his house. Very snug to-night, his house; not big and empty as it had seemed so often. The three of them downstairs at dinner, Maraquita already bossing them, even Eben liking her; bossing Fu a bit, and he liking her too. By golly, thought Eben as he watched Fu pass the fish, Fu is actually smiling to-night. Chinese are just like children. Want something going on all the time. Above him, Eben heard the *amah* walking about Margaret's room, and once the cry of his new-born son. Wonderful day! Captain Hawley felt as if the bread of life had been given him.

From top to bottom, the tall, narrow house was lighted like a beacon standing above the river. "The Gold Dust River," they called it up here, because

it sometimes ran golden-yellow with the sands of Tibet. Not altogether a good name though, for in springtime it ran blood-red where streams flowed down to it over the perpendicular rock walls carrying red silt in solution. And sometimes, when there were wars, the river had run red with the blood of men. But that was long ago.

VI

DAY after day the hull of the steamer stood waiting on the ways. The caulkers had finished and gone away. The carpenters had completed the pilot-house. She gleamed white in her final coat of paint. All Eben could think of was the moment when they should launch her for then the engine would be installed.

The river, so slow in rising—heart-sickening, it was. Eben grew more irritable, more angular, until he seemed seven feet tall when he stalked gloomily to his ship on the sand spit underneath the untidy eagle's nest of a city, with its rude out-juttings of houses, propped up by bamboo poles stuck into the embankment. Even the good humor of Hoffman was strained by Eben's impatience.

For once Margaret forgot to listen for the jerk in her husband's step. She was too busy. Either it was the baby's feeding time or bathing time.

Maraquita laughed at them all and bossed them. She made two gardens—her own and one for Mar-

garet in the corner of the compound, out of the way of the feet of the endless number of coolies padding back and forth on office business. She peered into seed envelopes, hurried about in search of the gardener, who sat on his feet in the shade of the compound wall; sped like a breath of wind up the three flights of stairs to tell Margaret what was happening in her house; down again across the Street of Perpetual Happiness and into her own kitchen, her voiced raised high in argument, haranguing the cook she had brought with her from Shanghai: "How fashion this chicken so dear? I no pay. No can do."

And the cook protesting: "Missie, what thing? Plenty time stay you family. My no squeeze. All ploper. S'pose Missie no like more better go Shanghai." He stood before her, the picture of injured virtue: blue trousers tied neatly around his ankles with black satin bands, short white coat, neatly braided queue, on his face the expression of resignation.

Maraquita in a pink dress, her face animated with assumed anger, crying: "Nonsense, Ah Chi. No can go, no b'long proper custom, no b'long *kuei chu.* S'pose go, my lose too much face. S'pose go away any man talkee what thing? I pay you one hundred cash."

Ah Chi's voice, "Allee light, Missie. I lose." He sighed.

Maraquita fled out of the door into her garden, singing a song. Ah Chi rattled his kettles to show his displeasure, then addressed the coolie just enter-

ing the kitchen, "Very fine Missie." He picked up his abacus, clicked its balls back and forth, then wrote with his brush in his account book. "Very good," he murmured to himself. "Chickens very cheap this side. Missie no savee. I makee plenty."

VII

AT sunset, the river still flowed in her winter channel. At dawn the wan reach of water was creeping shoreward, licking the ways on which the steamer stood. Eben, waking to a commotion of anchors raised and lowered, men calling to each other, gave one glance out the window and dashed down through the silent house, along the Street of Perpetual Happiness, and knocked on Hoffman's gate.

"Eh, Hoffman, the river's risin'!"

Hoffman ran out half-dressed, crying: "By golly. Did I not tell you de river she must coom?"

Like magic it rose. Already it stood in the doorways of the beggars' huts. They hurried down the steps of the quay.

"Get a hundred coolies," shouted Eben to Fu Ling, who had followed. "We've got to ease her off right now."

Hoffman stood in a foot of water, fastening the great bamboo cable to the stern of their boat. Fifty odd coolies, blue trousers rolled up to their loins,

stripped to the waist, appeared from nowhere. Eben raised his hammer to drive out the wedge that held the steamer on the ways.

"Wait, wait," faintly called a voice from the quay. Down the steps along the foreshore came Maraquita like a flying bit of pink cloud. So Hoffman thought, fondly watching her hurry out to the prow of the boat, wetting her tiny slippered feet in the rising water. "Help me up," she commanded. He lowered the ladder, lent her a hand to the deck.

"You've delayed us," said Eben, his brows beetling.

Maraquita did not notice. "Quick, say her name or I will do it myself."

"The Endeavor," gruffly spoke Eben. Maraquita advanced and broke a bottle of champagne over the prow.

With a mighty blow, Eben drove out the last wedge. "Let her go," he shouted.

"E-ho-eh," chanted the coolies, and a hundred brown arms helped ease her off.

The Endeavor was launched.

VIII

THAT afternoon all of them sat at tea in Maraquita's overfilled, stuffy little dining-room. Margaret was out for the first time since the baby's birth. Today he was a month old, and he lay in her lap, a

beautiful silver ring around his neck with a lock fastening it. Mr. Liu had presented it to him that morning after the steamer was launched. When a son was a month old in Chinese households, Mr. Liu explained, he had his first celebration. This ring would keep him locked away from evil spirits. On his wrist he wore two silver bracelets, Fu's gift. Margaret, discussing with Maraquita plans for his christening, looked often at him as he moved his hands in aimless baby fashion, setting the bracelets tinkling faintly together. "Yes," she said absently, "Eben wants him named after him." She was thinking she did not altogether like his wearing these queer Chinese things.

The men discussed the best and quickest way to install the engine. Eben kept getting up and pacing back and forth, lighting and relighting his pipe. He wished he had not come. From here he could not see his ship, and something might go wrong at the office where Mr. Liu was trying to persuade a Chinese merchant to risk a shipment in the steamer, and quibbling with him over the rates.

IX

BEHIND the vermilion wall of the Yamen, the official Li Chen Ho sat at a table, also sipping tea. Holding his writing brush with the beautiful precision characteristic of the Chinese art of callig-

raphy, he wrote a long line of spidery characters, going down the oblong paper. Beginning at the right, he filled the page with vertical lines—an official communication, telling Eben that information had just been received from the upper river of many bandits. He had no river police he could spare, he wrote, to escort the brave Captain Hawley. He must, therefore, much against his own wish, forbid the steamer's departure.

The insolence of these outside barbarians, thought Li Chen Ho, disturbing the perfect custom of the Flowery Kingdom, bringing into this perfect country that vulgar thing they called machinery. Insulting! These people dragging their playthings and silly religion to the land of Confucius. They had gained rights of trade all the way up The River Supreme. And lately, how disturbing the rumor that the Little Emperor had planned to give these foreign devils much power! But the Empress, the old Buddha, had imprisoned him and done away with all that.

He, Li Chen Ho, would see that Captain Hawley did not go up the river. He would give him excuse after excuse until the summer freshets came. That would settle it until twelve moons had passed, and by that time the Red Spears organization, gathering throughout the country, might have succeeded in getting rid of the foreigners. Who knows?

Li Chen sealed the letter, stamped it with his official seal, and sent it by courier.

Next day, Eben, dressed in his best, riding in state in a sedan chair, went to call on the official to discuss

the matter. Two hours he waited in the outer court where, from a window across the way, Li Chen Ho and some friends watched him tramping back and forth. What lack of repose in these outside barbarians!

The time stretched out to three hours. At last Eben went away. Dismissing his chair, he strode through the city, his brows drawn together, his gaze on the pavement.

"The Great Tiger is angry. His breath is hot," whispered the people on the Street of Perpetual Happiness.

X

EBEN, like Archibald Little, decided to defy the officials. His customs papers were in order, the treaties granted him the right. He sent word to Li Chen Ho that he was leaving without escort. There was no answer.

So the day of departure came. Up in the pilot-house stood Captain Hawley. At last he had got back his self-esteem. Once more he stood in command on a steamer—his own this time.

Down in the engine-room could be heard the deep rumble of Hoffman's heavy bass.

Sauntering on the deck, his eyelids lowered like blinds discreetly drawn to guard the secret of his pleasure, Fu contemplated the six Chinese sailors standing at their posts and the pilot in readiness at

the wheel. "It is well," he meditated. In accordance with the perfect teaching he had striven to the uttermost in the affairs of his master. Thus the great sin had been averted—the man-child had come. And now glory. Master and he employing many underlings, and on the shore hundreds of men of the Flowery Kingdom surveying him, Fu Ling Ting, quietly pacing the deck, as though in command of the fire-boat.

A sampan came alongside. There was a little flurry on the deck and Maraquita's voice saying: "The idea, Hoffman, come up here at once and get these radishes and lettuce. You forgot them."

Fu walked the length of the deck, beating a copper gong. "All visitors off." Hoffman disappeared for the final time into the engine-room. Captain Hawley rang the signal "Slow Ahead." The engine quickened into life. "Cast off your stern-lines." In the twilight of early dawn they steamed out of the harbor, Eben waving to Margaret as she held his son in the window at the top of his house. The quay, on a level with the steamer now that the river was nearing her summer level, showed a single mass of blue—hundreds of Chinese. For a moment their faces seemed sinister.

The day grew. All was silent on the little steamer except the even beat of the machinery, the swish of the water falling away from the prow. Overwhelming emotion took possession of Eben. In another half-hour his dream, his project, his oft-repeated claim that he could build a steamer that would safely run the most terrible rapids in the

world, would be put to the test. Those letters he had written to the seasoned shipping men of Shanghai seemed now to him to have been sheer bravado. How could he tell what his steamer would do when the first great rapid struck her brow? Panic engulfed him like a black wave.

Ahead loomed the two high walls of the Yellow Cat Gorge. No drawing back now. As he steamed into the cleft between the cliffs he felt his ship dwarf to a rowboat. Only a moment and he was hard upon the first rapid. As he threw the dial to "Full Speed Ahead," it seemed as if the power of the engine would rend his little ship asunder, but he began to fear that even so it was not enough to slide her over the rapid's top. Abandoning the safest course up between the axis of the current and the backwater, he pointed her straight up the eddy, hoping thus to gain enough momentum to bounce her over the rapid-head.

He didn't know his crew, and he didn't know his ship, and was at grips with this she-devil of a river! No, he didn't know his ship! She was hanging at the head of the rapid! He let out a string of oaths at the Chinese pilot. "Damn you, keep her nose into it. Damn you, Hoffman. Hoffman, where are you? Give her steam! Oh, good old Hoffman." He felt the ship gather herself together. She was over!

A ruddy face was poked out of the companion-way. "Fine beesness," shouted Hoffman. "I do de engine mineself in all de bad blaze. Vat a river!"

Round-eyed, he gazed up at the great precipices,

craning his neck to see their tops. Here and there sheets of water, some of them blood-red and some yellow as gold, fell sheer from the brink of the gorge to swell the mounting volume of the river. Ahead, the thick, silt-burdened water churned itself to a chocolate foam, sucked down into the funnel of the rapid. Hoffman's jolly face grew sober. "By golly, I guess I go look-zee dose engine." Already the ship was charging the swift race below the whirlpool of the next rapid.

At last they had traversed the fifteen miles of the Yellow Cat Gorge. Looking back, they could not see whence they had come. It was as though the walls of the gorge had drawn together behind them. The sun beat down upon the river, but the opaque, sand-charged water gave off no gleam.

As the day advanced and they passed from gorge to gorge, Eben felt that he knew less and less about the river, that all those years of study, the slow, painful journeys back and forth in a junk had taught him nothing. The river changed momentarily before his eyes. Unnerved, jumpy, once he entirely lost his bearings. He recalled the bit at low water, the rocks and reefs in the fairway. But now at mid-water, he did not know whether the rocks were straight ahead of him or a little to one side. He could not remember anything. Surely he'd scrape a hole in the ship's bottom. But on they went.

Late in the afternoon the ship climbed steadily up the incline of the last rapid to be traveled that day. Eben thought he just had strength enough to

reach the night's anchorage. All at once he felt her stand still, lose a little, barely hold her own. There she hung at the rapid-head while he was held spell-bound in a world of Gargantuan black cliffs, fabulous gold streams tumbling from the sky, fantastic waters swirling in circles, all fighting his pigmy ship! In a dream he beheld trackers prancing on the shore, shouting to take the boat over the rapid. He never remembered giving the order to get the lines over the side to them. He was conscious only of the ship with engines at full speed yet dropping down toward the rocks below them—his little steamer on which were staked the fortunes of Margaret and Margaret's son and Maraquita and Maraquita's baby that was coming and Hoffman and himself!

Then two hundred coolies, pulling on the ropes, chanted,"*Chor, chor.* Put your shoulder to it, put your shoulder to it," almost drowning out the rush of the waters, the roar of the machinery.

"She moves, she moves," whispered Eben between tight-shut teeth.

Slowly, his ship, like a spent runner, slid into the slack water beyond. The day was done—the day for which Eben had worked and dreamed seven years.

XI

THEY sat at the table in the tiny saloon. Fu served them.

"Oh, my God," said Eben, "I'm too tired to eat.

I'm livin' the day all over, seein' her in those rapids, seein' her climb up 'em like a crazy cat."

Hoffman, hunched down in his chair, murmured, "Vat a river." Then, with more spirit: "A hell-cat she iss. Goot the ladies are not here so we can swear at her. Odervise ve boost."

Without further speech they finished their meal, the only sounds the scrape of their spoons, the tiny *click-click* of the hard bodies of insects hitting the shade of the lamp. After the third cup of coffee, Eben shoved back his chair. "Drat those moths." He brushed them off his neck with an impatient gesture. "Fu, put the light out."

The two men filled their pipes and in silence sat smoking. Often Eben would take his pipe out of his mouth and hold it suspended as he leaned forward, listening. Suppose a sudden rise should dislodge his fend-off spars? The black masses of rocks hanging over them oppressed him . . . also the stillness, only accentuated by the small noises of nature—the *whir* of bat wings, the distant bark of dogs.

XII

EACH successive struggle with the river brought out the goose-flesh all over Eben, sent the drops of perspiration trickling off his nose, made the palms of his hands wet and clammy, brought him the sickening sensation that all was lost. Then gradually as he safely maneuvered his ship out of one gorge

after another, always on the alert for some sudden dart of a junk across his prow to cast off a string of devils, he regained confidence. He began to rely on his seaman's instinct, grafted upon his hard-earned knowledge of the river. Soon he could judge with exactness the power of his steamer, and whether or not he needed to take on the extra expense of trackers, yelling from the shore to take the boat over the rapid, cursing him if he did not let them.

Only once again did his judgment prove amiss. Hung up on the rapid-head, with no possibility of getting a cable ashore, all goose-flesh and trickling sweat, he finally managed to drop the craft, stern on, down the swirling torrent, keeping her by a nice use of helm and engine into the very center of the tongue. Suddenly she made a broad sheer off athwart the rapid, caught by a backwater which pushed her forward again. Eben had no precedent to go on. By blind instinct he signaled the engines to stop and prayed God to see him through. "Right the helm, steady now," he shouted. Actually it was only a couple of minutes until he was steering her into the eddy below the rapid, but the moment gave him a profound schooling in the treacherous ways of the river.

XIII

ON the tenth night they reached Wanshien. They were done with the gorges. Above Wanshien the cliffs receded, the rapids grew fewer. Finally, only

the swift current remained. It was even possible to run at night. No need to anchor now. There was a moon the last night before Chungking, and Eben ordered "Full Speed Ahead" and himself took the wheel. Hour after hour his ears were filled with the *chug-chug* of the machinery, the chattering of the windows in the pilot-house, the vibration of the engine, kept going by Hoffman down in the engine-room. As a tom-tom to a native, the swift-moving mechanical reciprocation of the pistons in their cylinders beat their rhythm into his brain. All through the night his spirit gloated and boasted until he was drunk with the sense of his own power. Without giving obeisance, he passed the colossal gilded Buddha which for centuries had protected navigators. What did such things matter to him?

Perhaps he was light-headed with the long hours of the run and the intoxication of power, for in the very early morning, when his eyes became heavy with sleep, he saw the second vision of his life. Floating on a white veil of mist, a dream city—battlemented wall, within it hills, and ascending to their very tops, white-walled dwellings. It seemed to Eben that at any moment the sky above, tinged now with the ethereal light of dawn, might open and the city be drawn up through the aperture. His man's heart yearned for this city. He wanted to possess it, to be its master. And yet some premonition warned him of failure.

His hand, dropping for an instant off the wheel, roused him, and he knew the city for what it was,

the City of Seven Gates—Chungking, at the head of steam navigation, the great outlet for the trade of Szechuan and Tibet—his rendezvous with Little. Mists hid the foot of the promontory on which it stood and the two rivers converging there to make the great Yangtse.

"Vell," said Hoffman at his side, "verr iss der band?"

"The band?" asked Eben. "What are you talking about now?"

"De band, sure. By golly, it iss a great thing ve haf done."

"Oh, that. . . . My country is not interested." Eben spoke a little bitterly. His gorgeous mood of the night was fast evaporating. "Your country is different. So is England. You know how to trade. We did in the days of the clippers. Wonder if we'll ever come back to days like that. Trade's a great thing. Kind of romantic, I see it. But I guess nobody'll ever hear about my bringing this ship through the nastiest bit of water there is—some old pals of mine in Shanghai, that's all. Yet Americans put the first steamer on the lower Yangtse. S'pose no one ever heard of that, either." He fell into moody silence.

At that moment, out of the mist still hanging about the ship stepped Archibald Little. He grasped Eben's hand. Only the one word, "Congratulations." But immediately to Eben the glory of his undertaking came back.

Later, making his way to the Customs House at Chungking with his papers, elation again fled from him. Very seldom was Eben oppressed by his surroundings, but to-day, in the reaction after the strain of the journey, caught on the rebound in this moisture-laden air, his personality, usually inviolate to outside attack, became submerged in the ceaseless flux of humanity, belched forth, drawn in, through the seven yawning gates in the city wall. Inside those unexpanding walls dwelt a hundred thousand souls.

As Eben climbed the steps upon steps which made the city streets, down toward him flowed, like a running stream, men, men, men. With him, carrying him along, another stream, men, men, men. No break in the stream flowing out, flowing in to the maw of the city, a wan river of humanity, a whelming tide of life in which his identity disappeared.

XIV

BUT when, two days later, with a full cargo, Eben started back to Ichang, he felt his individuality as finely tempered as steel, a tool that would cut and shape the compact mass of this race among whom he dwelt. For sheer defiant joy he yanked the cord of his whistle in triumphant farewell.

The current ran swiftly; the engine worked smoothly. Together they sped the little ship onward. She rushed down the river, past hills and valleys, past the white villages nestled under the fresh green of the spring bamboos. The day waxed, waned, and as the sun dipped toward the hills they sighted the city of Wanshien.

Early the next morning Eben steamed away toward a solid rock wall; then the hidden gateway appeared and they were in the first gorge. Through running whirlpools, flung for an instant out of their course by the swirl of the waters, through the Rice Granary Gorge, the Horse Lung Gorge they shot. Rounding a bend they passed a junk caught in a whirl of funneling water. Its stern rose high in the air. There was a faint cry, "*Chui ming, chui ming,* save life, save life," as it was sucked under. A second's hesitation in the turn of the wheel and they, too, would be swept out of the channel, piled on a hidden boulder or mounted upon a dome of water which, suddenly caving in, would pull them down with it.

Eben never took his eyes from the river. Past thin ribbons of towing paths cut in the face of the cliffs, past tiny figures looking down at them from above, past cliff after black cliff, now, in the spring, garlanded with green. Late in the afternoon Eben steamed out of the shadow of the last rock wall into the molten gold of sunshine and river. Triumphant, he ordered the anchor down.

XV

TEN minutes later Fu Ling entered his own domain, the kitchen of the house of Hawley. He found the cook asleep with his head on the table, the coolie preparing the evening meal of Margaret.

"Worthless one. Is it thus you do in my absence? The Master and I have returned safely after conquering the river dragon with our fire dragon and you sleep as if it were a common day. There must be two feasts to-night, one for the Master and later one for me. Now quickly to the market. And on your way stop at the house of the Number-Two Master and command Ah Chi to come immediately and help in the preparations. And the house-boy may come too to assist me, for it seems wise to me that his Master and Missie be our guests this evening."

In another half hour Ah Chi arrived. "Honorable friend of many moons," he addressed Fu, "all has been done as you desire. I have implored my Missie with the investigating nose to allow me to compose my honorable person in bed as this day my mysterious interiors have put forth fire. The coolie will arrive shortly bearing a letter telling your Missie of my sickness. Now to the making of my delectable concoction of chicken which only my miserable self can do. But see to it that my Missie does not put her inquiring nose in the kitchen when later she arrives."

"It isn't cholera, is it?" asked Margaret, when Fu brought her Maraquita's note.

"I no savee, Missie," replied Fu. "Ah Chi very bad. P'laps die."

Gravely, as befitting one who has a sick friend, he received her instructions to prepare dinner for four, as the Number-Two Master and Missie would have to dine with them now that Ah Chi was ill. Then he sped back to his kitchen, whence came the sound of chopping, the odor of frying chicken. He sniffed the air with satisfaction. These strange people had not realized the importance of feasting this evening. Nevertheless it should be done according to the best custom of Shanghai.

At eight, Fu Ling opened the doors into the dining-room. There stretched a table big enough to accommodate a dozen people, four places half lost in the vast expanse of white table-cloth. Down the middle of the table, picked out in grains of colored rice, two dragons struggled together.

"Why, it's a party," gasped Margaret.

"Of course we should have a party. Why didn't I think of it?" cried Maraquita. She lifted her glass: "To the great Captain Hawley."

"Hear, hear," boomed Hoffman, pounding the table. "Ve vill make happiness to-night. De Gold Dust River. It vill bring us plenty gold."

"Fools, those fellows in Shanghai," spoke Eben, seating himself.

Fu swung wide the door into the hall, ushering in the *amah* with the baby dressed in his best.

"Oh, see," cried Maraquita, clapping her hands. "We're all here now for the celebration." Again she seized her glass. "Here's to the second Captain Hawley."

"No, no," protested Margaret.

XVI

TWO trips Eben made without difficulty, as if river and people had never opposed him. "Pooh, easy, once you get started," he boasted, off guard and strutting a little. On the fourth trip, the Customs House people in Chungking asked Eben with concern about his family. In Ichang? Well, reports were coming in of a strange band—the Righteous Harmony Fists, the Boxers. They were springing up on all sides, doing violence to white people. As yet there had been no activities along the Yangtse, but the last few days there had been disturbing rumors.

As he hurried back to his ship, Eben scrutinized the closely packed humanity of the city to see if he could detect any unusual hatred toward the white man, but not a single face betrayed what passions lay beneath. Eben longed to yank at them as he would at masks—tear them away, see what lay beneath. Did Fu know about this new movement? He'd ask him when he got back. No, he'd be damned if he would. Fu had a mask too, and he'd be like the rest. He'd only say, "I no savee, Master." Eben could

hear him now. So he thought as he went down the worn steps which made the streets of the city, streets that for centuries had never been dry, covered with slimy ooze, the dirt from thousands of feet, mixed with the drip and slop from thousands of pails of water.

He invited Mr. Little aboard for dinner, and they talked far into the night. Little was holding his steamer in readiness to take the white people out in case of trouble. Something was wrong in the city, he said. You could not put your finger on it, but it was none the less real. Something was going to happen.

Eben loaded cargo that night, so as to be off in the morning.

XVII

WHY had he been such a fool as to bring Fu with him and leave Margaret and his son unprotected, Eben asked himself as he hoisted anchor and started on the home run. But soon he forgot his anxiety, absorbed in that wild dash down-river. Early they made Wanshien. From the huddled junks the black eyes of the natives surveyed the fire-boat as through a glass darkly. Eben's anxiety returned. Again they started early, shooting down through the gorges. The pilot stood at the wheel. His features betrayed nothing. Not far to go now.

"My God," cried Eben. A sudden tearing sound,

a long-agonized shudder through the ship . . . the bow lurching forward like a man shot, the pilot and Eben thrown to their knees. Even as he went down, Eben pressed the dial to "Reverse Engines." Too late. The steamer drove on to her doom, wedged herself in the rocks, rearing, then toppled on her head with the engines still racing.

She was settling. Some of the crew had been thrown into the water, some jumped overboard. Climbing up the sloping deck, Eben got to the engine-room. There was Hoffman, lying unconscious against the stairs, his assistant mashed in the moving machinery. Water was seeping in. Soon it would flood the engines. Eben pulled madly at the inert body of Hoffman, got a life-buoy on him, threw him over, jumped himself, made the shore, went back for Fu, swam with him to the bank. There he sat on a rock, unmindful of the two unconscious figures at his feet or of the crew jabbering around him. He saw only his ship.

The river came on swiftly, carried away the rails, the smoke-stack. At last only the stern gleamed white above the dirty water, pounding the stricken ship, churning itself into angry yellow foam. The wheel floated away on the current, the back of a chair, a cooking pot. Rising rapidly, the river licked the narrow shelf where Eben sat, reached stealthily for the unconscious form of Hoffman. Eben did not move. Only the stern remained. Dimly he saw it in the oncoming darkness. Now it was gone. All that was left was a slight swell of the chocolate water.

XVIII

IN a hired sampan they reached Ichang the night of the next day. It was quiet as Eben came into his own compound. He ascended the long flight of stairs, following a dim light that shone at the bottom of Margaret's door. For a while he stood looking at that crack of light, then crept quietly back to his dark office. He'd give Fu time to bring the news to her. Anyway, fear of the massacre of his family was scotched.

When at last he went up, Margaret was standing looking out at the river. She turned as he entered. About to speak, he thought. Forestalling her, he began: "Don't let's talk about it. The thing's done. There's no use asking me who's to blame, either. I was, I suppose, if you insist."

Eben was amazed at his own words, for he had wanted Margaret's sympathy. Why was he slashing out at her? He hated himself for the hurt look in her eyes, yet he could not seem to help hurting her more. He went on without volition. "Whether it's my fault or not, you'd think so. You never did trust me. That's been at the bottom of all my troubles."

"Stop," cried Margaret. Anger flashed from her eyes. Eben was horrified as he stood there facing her anger. It was like a second wreck. For years she had

not been angry with him. Always really she had known when he needed her.

"You are unjust—you are cruel. You have no right to blame me. It isn't fair. I've stood by you through all these years. Everybody has told you you couldn't do it—that it was not possible to run steamers through these awful gorges. I've given up everything for this mad scheme of yours. You would not even let me have a child. Now he's come and you love him, because you expect to make use of him. The river!" Margaret's voice rose almost into a cry for help, a call to be saved. "I always told you there was something terrible about this river!" With a sob, she leaned over her baby, lying asleep in his bed. "These people do not want us; they'll injure us yet. Oh, they'll injure him. Eben, come away now before it's too late," she pleaded.

Leave the river! All his craving for sympathy fled at her words. Never. He felt hard as steel once more.

Down below, in the night, he heard a tumultuous roar. "A spring freshet," he thought mechanically. Louder and louder in the room grew the insistent voice of the river. He turned and went out. His unbearable sense of defeat had crystallized into a sterner determination. Margaret's words had given him a new inspiration. His son henceforth was a personality to him. He himself was forty-seven. His son made that as nothing, lengthened out his years. He'd begin over.

XIX

THE next morning he was in his office trying to cope with his disaster. As never before, he had his back to the wall! In Mr. Liu he sensed the thinly veiled contempt of the Chinaman for the man who has failed. Entirely unveiled was the hate of the small merchants who, after much persuasion, had entrusted their cargo to his steamer. Through the morning, Mr. Liu, suave and self-contained, talked to them. Supposedly he was offering them Eben's terms—a compromise—something paid down now and the rest as soon as Eben was on his feet. With a kind of sixth sense developed through years of such dealing Eben suspected Mr. Liu was not translating correctly. What was his game? Was he for him or against him? Mr. Liu's expression told him nothing.

At noon, when the merchants had gone, Fu came bringing a tray of food. As he laid out each item with meticulous care, he said in a casual tone: "Master, my savee, you more better catchee boat. Plenty trouble this side, s'pose no go."

"Nonsense," said Eben. "I'll stay and settle my claims, not skip out. Nobody's going to hurt me."

"P'laps," answered Fu. "I think more better my takee small master Shanghai side."

"Tend to your own business," snapped Eben. And Fu went off affronted.

Through the afternoon Hawley waited. Mr. Liu did not return. Neither did the gesticulating merchants who in the morning Eben had hoped were only working themselves into a theatrical fury. There was no one to bring him news, since he had offended even Fu. Hour after hour he bent over his figures, trying to find a way. Finally he buried his head in his hands and faced the facts. He did not know a place where he could borrow. If the shipping men would not lend him money before, certainly they would not now. If he could not satisfy the angry merchants there would be trouble afoot. Uneasily he thought of how he had defied the officials—gone up the river without their consent. They had lost a great deal of face, and the Oriental always revenged himself. He was weak now—vulnerable. One could never afford to be weak among Orientals.

He felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to see Margaret looking down at him. "Eben," she said gently, "if you can't give up the river, there's my house in Shanghai that father left me. You can sell it and use the money. I had meant it for baby but . . . I can't have you broken like this . . . I . . . I won't have you despised and insulted."

"Do you mean it?" gasped Eben, his eyes upon hers. "I could get another start with that. I could make good before them."

"Yes," she said. "I . . . I don't know why I am doing it. I meant all I said last night . . . But you can have the money." Quickly she turned and walked out through the office so Eben should not see the

tears running down her cheeks. "Oh, I'm worse than you in your hardness, Eben, my husband. You believe in the river. I don't. I've always known it was more powerful than us all." She walked rapidly up the stairs, whispering as she went: "I've betrayed my baby, the baby God gave me—the sign of his goodness. I've given him over to the river. Oh, Eben, Eben."

The door had scarcely closed on her before Eben was again absorbed in his figures. To-morrow he would be ready to talk to the merchants and offer them full payment. He reached for the bell. He'd get Fu and have him call Liu to arrange about the exchange. There was no answer.

XX

LI I-FANG, a lean old henchman from one of the remote ramifications of the patriarchal family of Li Chen Ho, responded to the summons of that official. Passing through the Yamen, he lifted the curtain of bamboo fibers and stood within his mighty kinsman's private room. More than once had he been called upon in similar fashion when some deed called for utmost secrecy.

Li Chen Ho preserved the calm manner, the perfect pattern of officialdom. There was no expression to his quiet mouth or the blank shining of his eyes,

brilliant as crystals beneath the half-dropped hood of the lids. Only a little unusual expansion of the wide nostrils betrayed emotion. A small heap of coins lay on the polished surface of his desk. Could Li I-Fang find a dead baby?

Not difficult. Plenty at the baby towers. . . . A boy? Not so easy. No boys thrown into the baby towers. Still . . . The henchman reached out his hand with its nail two inches long on the little finger. Long as that of Li Chen Ho, it disclaimed work, proved him a worthy member of the clan.

Idly Li Chen Ho moved the pile of money out of reach of his kinsman's avaricious fingers. Yes, Li I-Fang thought, possibly a boy child could be secured. Li Chen Ho shoved the shining silver toward him again.

"It is simple," spoke the official. "Place it in some refuse at the gate of the barbarian living by the river, and when you go to the tea-house mention the matter of the man-child. Oh, yes, one thing more. See that its eyes have been put out."

Later in the day a member of the Righteous Harmony Fists stood for a moment before the official desk of Li Chen Ho. "That barbarian in the great house by the river, the people in the streets say, takes the eyes of children to make medicine." The great man spoke tersely. "Some day, and who can tell how soon, the people will be roused by his deeds. Should they clamor at the gate of the barbarian, it must be arranged that those within do not escape. A

Righteous Harmony Fist man need not fear death —it is not so? Then he need not fear the giant albino."

His duties completed for the afternoon, Li Chen Ho sought the seclusion of his garden, where nature had been copied in a tiny pattern of perfection —a bridge, a lotus pond—the work of a connoisseur. Far removed from the commotion of the city, he waited for the young moon to cast her crescent shape in his lake. That was why he did not hear the noise of the disgusting rabble shouting *"Da, da"* outside Captain Hawley's gate. Had he heard, it would of course have been his duty to send his private guard to protect the foreigner.

XXI

THEY were all in Eben's office. Eben paced the floor, cursing himself for a fool. Why had he waited so long? He could not think with that infernal noise going on. *"Da, da."* It rose like a chant, barbaric, bloodthirsty. If they'd only stop it for a moment.

"My Gott!" gasped Hoffman, sinking into a chair. "Ve're caught."

They'd have to make a run for it, thought Eben. Yes, Margaret saw that. She'd put her coat on and wrapped the baby in a shawl. But there was Maraquita heavy with child. No, they couldn't run.

"Have all the servants deserted?" he asked Margaret.

"Yes," she answered.

"Da, da. Kill, kill." Like the persistent beat of breakers.

The door moved slowly inward. Margaret gave a stifled cry, holding her baby closer. But it was Fu and the *amah.* Fu laid down a bundle, saying: "I talkee you what do. Number-Two Missie very brown, makie *amah. Chop chop* Missie. Small master *amah* makee Chinaman baby." Taking him from Margaret's unresisting arms, *amah* stripped him quickly, covered him with some brown oily stuff, dressed him in Chinese clothes Fu took from the bundle, put a red cap on his head to cover his light, silky tuft of hair. Margaret reached out for him. Fu stopped her. "No, Missie no can have. Number-Two Missie take. You too high, Missie. Every man savee you. My makee Missie old man." He handed the baby to Maraquita, dressed now in the *amah's* garments.

"Da, da." The chant broke about the outer walls of the compound. But Fu worked on. He handed Margaret a man's long gown and a "wind hood" such as old men wear in the winter. If she bowed her head it hid her face. Its cape fell well over her shoulders. He gave her a heavy gnarled staff. The men he did not disguise.

"B'long this fashion," he commanded. "Two Master open back gate. Go out, Chinaman see. Chinaman makee chase. All go way. My, two piecie

Missie, Small Master, open front gate, go way. S'pose all man makee die, my keepee small master. Talkee belong my. Takee Shanghai side. S'pose no die, every man go river side. More far."

Then he gave them minute instructions where to find the junk he had waiting for them. It was a desperate plan, but there was no other way. The chant grew louder and louder, swelled by more voices. Men were battering on the front gate to break it in. There was no time to waste. They stole hastily down the stairs. Fu and the women hid in the front gatehouse.

The noise was deafening outside—the cries and the pounding. As they peeked through a knot-hole in the back gate, Eben and Hoffman saw the mob was surging toward the front of the compound facing the river. To the left the Street of Perpetual Happiness was empty. The gateway itself stood clear. Now was their chance. They slid back the bolt, threw the gates wide, darted out, running toward the left. They had gone but a few paces when from a deserted tea-house across the way the voice of the *amah* rang out. "Foreign devil, foreign devil," she screamed. The rabble gave chase, bellowing like animals. Ducking, dodging, Eben and Hoffman ran on, pulling the horde after them, away from their wives. Now they outdistanced the crowd, now their pursuers made on them.

As the mob swept away from the front gate, Fu led his little party boldly out. Immediately he left them, sauntering on ahead. A flying remnant of the

mob accosted Fu. "He was the servant of those foreign devils!"

"Ah me," sighed Fu, the composure of his features complete. "Yesterday, yes. But to-day, no. Finding them evil, I left this morning. For the sake of my own people I will tell you where to find them. I heard them whispering together this morning where they would hide. Go back to the house, in the women's apartments, the farthest away from the entrance."

They scurried past Margaret and Maraquita toward the house. Slowly Margaret moved on and Maraquita following two paces behind, little Eben asleep in her arms. Their hearts knocked against their ribs. They reached the end of the Street of Perpetual Happiness. Faintly now came the cries, *"Da, da."* Where were their husbands? Caught, stoned, beaten to death? They had lost Fu around the corner. Margaret thought she saw him ahead along the quay. They crept on, steeling themselves to that slow walk. Margaret felt her knees give under her, her staff trembled in her hand. Little Eben woke, wailing lustily. He was heavy in Maraquita's arms. Lower and lower he sagged. Close upon them lay the river, a wide black stream almost in flood. Paths were blotted out, huts under water. Fu moved ahead of them so slowly. Would it ever end? In their ears the far-off howling of the pack hunting Eben and Hoffman. *"Da, da.* Kill, kill."

Through the silent country-side they went on and on, through a village street, the houses close on each

side shuttered for the night. A wolf-like dog slunk at their heels, snuffing the strange odor of white people. They must cry out.

At last a solitary hooded junk in the distance. Fu walked toward it. They came alongside. The junkman bowed to them, decorously shaking his own hands. They looked up into Mr. Liu's quiet face. Fu hid them inside the junk.

All night Mr. Liu and Fu Ling squatted in the prow, unmoving, looking out at the swift-flowing river slapping the sides of the boat, waiting, waiting for Eben and Hoffman.

It was two o'clock when some one came stumbling upon the deck of the junk. Hoffman, exhausted, his lips swollen, flecks of white around his mouth. He gasped the word "water." But there was none to give him. Nothing but the river, tainted with stagnant slime from the rice paddies. He had been running all night, hunted from street to street. He did not know where Eben was.

Three o'clock and no Eben. Soon the village would be stirring and they must push on. Four o'clock. They had killed Eben. No, not killed. He was lost, had misunderstood Fu's instructions about the junk. Margaret knew she would never have found it alone. Five o'clock. The sun shining on the city of Ichang. They must go—without him. Mr. Liu stood ready to push off. "Missie, Master come. Look, see," spoke Fu. Her heart gave a great leap. But was this really he, this disheveled creature

stumbling down the path? Yes, the sun caught the iron-gray crest of his hair. Hatless. Clothing torn to shreds. Scarcely able to pull himself aboard even with Fu's assistance. He sank to a pile of matting.

Part III

Achievement

I

IT was ten years since the Boxer uprisings. Ten years ago the yellow race, resentful of the touch of the West, rose and drove the white man and his religion out of their Flowery Kingdom, swept foreign devils and their fire-boats from The River Supreme. Ten years since the Hawleys and Hoffmans had fled from Ichang.

It had taken a long time for the hate between the two races to die down. But Eben Hawley had not waited for that. The very next year he and Hoffman, with their families, had gone back to Ichang. Again for seven years Eben worked for the dream of his heart, years terrible in their accumulated difficulties. That disastrous wreck of his steamer in her first season intensified the skepticism of the shipping people toward his schemes, and Boxer activities had increased their belief in the bad faith of the Chinese. The people of Ichang, although not actively hostile, for the gunboats of the foreign powers lay in the river, keeping watch over their nationals, blocked him in a hundred small ways.

There was no Mr. Little any longer. Poor health had taken him back to England. Eben missed him sorely. Hoffman annoyed him with his easy ability to be happy. How should he conquer the river, he alone?

In time he found another ally. Just when Eben had reached the last of his endurance, he stumbled upon another Britisher as brave and as crazy as Little. His name was Plant. For many years he had been river inspector for the Customs. During this time he had lived in close touch with the Chinese, patiently building up their confidence in himself and his knowledge of the river. Finally he suggested to a group of wealthy merchants that they organize a company for the purpose of putting steamers on the upper river. The first season, operating a tug and lighter between Ichang and Chungking, ended without mishap, and then the news of the Chinese-controlled company spread up and down the Yangtse. Suddenly there was enthusiasm for the upper river.

Snatching at this enthusiasm, Eben and Hoffman made their second start. It took all the money they could scrape together—a little Hoffman raised in Germany, what was left from the sale of Margaret's house in Shanghai, a few thousand Eben's old pals were willing to invest. They registered under the American flag.

This time Eben made a more sober beginning, starting, as had Plant, with a tow-boat and flat. He did well with it, bought a second, then a third. He took few risks, placed cautious British skippers on two of his boats, captained the third himself, using dependable old Hoffman as his engineer. Slowly but surely the soundness of his little company was established, until now in this summer of 1910 it was an assured fact. Once more he began to feel powerful.

All his life this summer remained in his mind an idyl of happiness. His boats on the river; his tall narrow house, entirely repaired after the destruction of the Boxer year. Margaret serene and happy, her composure at last regained, as industrious as a beaver building around herself and her son the conventions of life which she seemed to hold so precious and necessary; he himself a bit of a personage at the white man's club, again looked up to and respected on the Street of Perpetual Happiness and in the city of Ichang.

And his beloved office. Into its very heart the wide gleaming mirror of the river threw its heat and light. The sun crept between the reeds of the porch screens and lay in long shining lines over the vast room. Mr. Liu sat behind his Western roll-top desk as exotic as ever. Only now in the summer in place of the plum-colored satin he was clad in the prescribed dress of the sixth and seventh months—a grass linen gown of pale blue. As of yore, his black hair was neatly braided and oiled, and even on the hottest days he wore his black satin skull cap with the red button.

II

PROUDLY Fu Ling surveyed this curious family which had become his through duty of servant to master. Their recovered fortune brought him great satisfaction. Without him how could they have

secured it? With what patience and sagacity he had held the family together through the second seven years of struggle, even as he had the first. For many moons after their return to Ichang, how Master and he had been despised and ridiculed by those officials who had betrayed Eben Hawley and turned the city against him that night in 1900. Why, there was scarcely a tea-house in all Ichang where he, Fu Ling Ting, could go for a cup of tea and a quiet chat. He was without a face. "How about your fire-boat and your dragon?" some one would always ask him, and then the whole tea-house would roar with laughter. Only for young Master had he stayed.

But now old Master and so himself, had their faces returned to them. There were three fire-eating boats for him to talk about in the tea-house. Of course there were those sullen junkmen who sat about and complained that the steamers ran into them, that in the narrowest gorges the wash from the fire-boats did not subside for an hour, and that the steamers spoiled the joss of wind and water. But Fu got satisfaction from their grumbling; it proved Master more powerful than the junkmen, gave him plenty big face.

Fu was growing stout with well-being, a figure every Chinese longed for, sign of plenty and abundance. He saw himself in the way of becoming very rich some day—a house with many courts like Mr. Liu's, one or two concubines, and many sons to worship him after death. When small Master grew more big he would go back to Ningpo, his ancestral home.

Underneath Master's business of boat and cargo he had organized his own pidgin cargo. Quite proper relation of servant to master. Big cargo top-side, little cargo bottom-side. Servant making little per cent on Master's business. When Master had first started *The Endeavor,* Fu had planned that on each trip down he would bring a little opium. Just a small profit in it then. Grown everywhere and therefore cheap. But now, since the old Buddha, plenty fine woman sitting on the Dragon Throne, had said it should not be grown, opium raised secretly in the valleys of Szechuan brought a fabulous price in this city and farther down-river. No risk—no one examine Master's steamers for opium. Very fine; Master big business top side, he little bottom side, some one on every one of Master's boats hiding it for him in the coal or in the pantry.

Sitting out in the compound by the gatehouse in the coolness which came toward midnight, Fu Ling Ting discoursed to those underlings grouped around him—the cook, the number-two cook, the *amah,* the house coolie, the outside coolie, the water coolie—on the success of the family and the importance of increasing their face in the city.

In young Master he found the only cause for eating bitterness. The boy did not obey him as he should. These little barbarians were like the big ones, with no idea of dignity. Here was Master in his shirt-sleeves half the time, and young Master sneaking off under pretext of going to Mr. Liu's or Number-Two Master's house. In reality he went to

swua-tz with junkmen and the sons of the gateman and the sweetmeat man, even the barber's son. If only he were a little more dignified, like Missie. Too much like old Master.

Many a time he had told young Master that barbers and soldiers were outside. Like the sons of prostitutes, they and their children could never study and become scholars. He had told him of the Flowery Kingdom, the perfect country, and of the great learning of its officials, of the rows of cells in the examination halls where these men sat for three days writing essays after the pattern of Confucius in order that they might hold official rank. And the boy had listened, seemingly impressed, but that very afternoon when Missie had been resting and he, Fu Ling Ting, reclining in old Master's chair on the front veranda (Missie would not know), had nodded off for a few moments, young Master had slipped out the back gate to nobody knew where. At last he had spoken to Master, but Master had done nothing about it. An outside barbarian never learned the perfect custom. *"Ai-yah. Mei yu fatsu."*

III

ONE day very early in the summer, old Eben came upon his son running down the Street of Perpetual Happiness. He watched him take off his sun helmet, walk into the sweatmeat vendor's shop and come out without it.

"What's up?" asked Eben, reaching out his long arm to detain his son.

"Well, you haven't yours on," spoke young Eben, a little breathlessly.

"So that's it," said his father. "Breaking the rules, are you? Well, don't let your ma catch you at it." Released, the boy slipped away with a sigh of relief, feeling for the first time a bond of understanding with that fearful person, his father. Ever since he could remember, until this summer, his father, when at home, had stalked about the house in a terrifying silence, a fierce and awful look in his blue eyes. Early, young Eben had decided he was not a man to tamper with. But to-day he had understood a little boy better than Fu, better than his mother.

Eben experienced his first real satisfaction in his son. Why, he was a chip off the old block! Guessed he'd have to take a hand in his bringing-up. Must not have him wrapped up in cotton wool any longer by his mother and Fu, who was becoming a regular old grandmother about him. When later that same afternoon he came upon young Eben shaking dice with a group of Chinese urchins in a secluded corner of the wharf, his eyes gleamed with satisfaction, and this time he pretended not to see him. Let the city of Ichang groom the lad. He must not grow up as Margaret had, held apart from the natives of the country. He did not want him shut away from the Chinese by language, always to talk through an interpreter as he had to. Young Eben, born and bred

in the interior, would be very valuable to the shipping business.

He remembered, now that he came to think of it, that the boy had a way of looking at things as Chinese did. Guessed he'd better see if Mr. Liu wouldn't let him study with his son Mo Mo. Might as well learn to write the language too. Umph, yes. Guessed he'd better go back to the office and arrange it right now.

IV

THOUGH his father never knew it, young Eben evaded his instructions even as he did those of his mother and Fu. On his way to study the Chinese classics with Mr. Liu's son, he loitered as he pleased. Still he learned a great deal more than ever his father guessed: that Fu got opium from various men on Hawley & Hoffman's boats, pilots, and cooks and engineers; that Mr. Liu *squeezed* his father; that the acts and ways of his family were discussed first in the servants' quarters and then over the city; that his mother had had no honor in the city until he was born; that in the afternoon the Chinese called his father the "Great Tiger"—in the morning they had other ways of speaking of him, for it would bring bad luck to mention a tiger before noon. He never thought much about these things, just knew them as facts of that Chinese world into which his parents did not enter.

However, sometimes he'd drop the brass knocker on the black gate of Mr. Liu's compound for, although he had decided he did not care much for Chinese classics, he liked to *bobbery* the old gateman who peered out at him over horn-rimmed glasses before he swung wide the two halves of the door. He liked to feel the cool air rising from the stones of the gallery that ran along the sides of the courts. Once he got a chance to peep into the mysterious ancestral hall. Too, he liked the school-room, with its latticed windows and stone floor. And he loved Mo Mo.

Often the two of them lay on their backs up on a hill behind the house of Liu within the shadow cast by a slim and graceful pagoda. Down below young Eben could see the gray-tiled roofs of Mr. Liu's house, with the love-birds carved on the ridge poles, and the great camphor trees rising out of the courts, throwing shadows down upon the roofs.

"Where do you sleep down there?" one afternoon young Eben asked Mo Mo.

Mo Mo rolled over on his stomach, raising his aristocratic young feet clad in their black satin shoes with cloth soles, into the air by the side of young Eben's rough leather shoes all scuffed at the toes. "Oh, back there in my mother's court." He waved vaguely down into the tree-tops. "Each of my father's wives has a whole court," he added, "but my mother has one of the finest now since I became the oldest son, and the gardener keeps the choicest plants outside her door. The others are jealous be-

cause Father goes to our court more than to all the others." Mo Mo sat up, looking bold and insolent. Young Eben had seen him look like that one day as he strutted before those wives who had lost their sons in the great cholera epidemic. It was then that Mo Mo had suddenly become Mr. Liu's eldest son.

"Tell me about all the dragons you know," demanded Eben, tired of Mo Mo's bragging, and regarding as shameful Mr. Liu's ménage. Hadn't his mother taught him it was shameful? So it must be. They lay very still now in the long grass by the pagoda, and Eben nearly went to sleep with the sun and the heat and the tinkle of the myriad wind bells swaying at the points of the seven roofs.

"There are so many I cannot tell you of them all. There are as many dragons as fish in the great deep. Only with the sacred numerals can we tell the number. There is one that rules the sea," Mo Mo recited in a sing-song tone. "He feeds on pearls and opals. He has a glowing armor of yellow scales, a beard under his long snout, a hairy tail, and shaggy legs. His mouth is gaping, his tongue is long, his teeth sharp. Fish are boiled by the blast of his breath. When he rises to the surface the ocean surges. Then there are great storms." Mo Mo's tone changed, his voice sank in awe. "Once my father saw him fly wingless through the air. So swift did he move that he made a great hurricane. Houses were destroyed."

Eben lay very still. He liked to think of the dragon eating pearls and opals—a tale almost as dear to

his heart as Jonah and the whale which his mother told him. But perhaps better he liked the God of Thunder. In a temple out in the hills beyond the city, where his mother and Aunt Maraquita sometimes took them on picnics, he had seen him—absolutely black, with bulging eyes, and bat's wings. His mother always shuddered when he pulled her in to look. Said it reminded her of something, but she would not tell what. His mother seemed afraid of so many things, but she was a very beautiful mother. If she had not taken him away, he would have stayed for hours looking at the wonderful creature. Mo Mo told him that the hammer the black god held was used to beat a drum and make thunder. Splendid!

Mo Mo shook him. "See, there's a dragon in the clouds this afternoon." They turned over on their backs, watching him ride across the blue sky sending up billowy foam. Silence there in the tall grass. Faintly on the still air came the click of mah-jongg chips from the courts of the women. Another sound, a kind of low monotonous moaning. Young Eben realized now he had been hearing it all the afternoon. "What's that?" he asked Mo Mo. "That crying."

"Oh, that," replied Mo Mo, "that is Little Flower, the girl-child of my father's little wife. Early this morning they bound her feet so that when she grows up she may have lily feet and sway as a bamboo when she walks."

"How long will it take?" asked Eben.

"Oh, many moons," said Mo Mo, "but she will have very small feet."

Hastily Eben rose, running with a whoop down the hill. He had seen his father's boat coming round the bend. He wanted to get home. So often in the courts of Mr. Liu's house he had watched Little Flower playing with the other children. He loved her even more than he did small Maraquita. Little Flower, in her pink satin shoes and her jade green coat, silver bracelets on her arms. Little Flower moaning like that! He ran on faster now, down the narrow streets as hot as a furnace. The stinging odor of fat thrown into the frying pans of the street restaurants made him feel faint and almost ill. In through the kitchen of his own home. Coming upon Fu nodding by the door, he tweaked the red tassel at the end of his queue. Fu surveyed him fondly. He hurried on upstairs. There sat his father. He was not so afraid of him as he used to be, and to-day he seemed a bulwark of safety.

V

THEY were all going over for tea at the house of Hoffman. It stood farther back in the city, a new house built after Boxer year, set in a garden surrounded by a high mud wall. You reached it by way of the Street of Perpetual Happiness. Margaret walked ahead with young Eben. Eben senior fol-

lowed. "What indignity," whispered the yellow people, sitting in their open shop-fronts. "The Tiger following behind."

At the corner they came upon the beggar that young Eben and small Maraquita called "Weeping Lulu." She lay on her strip of matting, face to the sky, wailing—

> Little white one, little foreign devil,
> Attain merit for yourself in heaven!
> Give me a *dongpan.*
> Give me a *cash.*
> Want to buy a donkey.
> Want to buy a horse.

Young Eben threw a *cash* into her begging bowl and said something to her in Chinese. The beggar ceased her wailing, and in the shops the shopkeepers, leaning over the counters, smiled and nodded. "Very good. The man-child of The Tiger uses our oaths well."

"What did you say to quiet her, Eben?" asked his mother as they flattened themselves against a house post to escape the coolies' slopping buckets.

"Oh, just some good Chinese Fu Ling taught me. Fu Ling said it would preserve my face."

"Are you certain it is *good* Chinese, Eben?" Margaret asked of his father.

Young Eben squirmed a little.

"Now don't you go bothering," he heard his father say.

"Anyway," thought young Eben, "neither of

them knows what I said, and Fu Ling won't tell."

At last they arrived at a black gate and a brass knocker much like Mr. Liu's. But within were no cool cellar-like courts, nor the mystery which young Eben found so fascinating in that strange other household. This house was a low one-storied affair, a veranda running around its four sides. Through its many doors there roamed dogs, servants, and children. Inside, a clutter of furniture—many tables covered with photographs in tarnished silver frames, easy chairs, their springs sagging, dogs and children curled into the sloping corners. Laughter and squabbling and Maraquita's voice raised in admonition.

It was surrounded by the loveliest garden in the world—so young Eben thought. And so did Hoffman and Maraquita who had made it.

They found Hoffman, his broad back bent over some drooping vegetable, and nearby, a baby sunk in the soft cushion of her lap, comfortable Aunt Maraquita, laughing and scolding and chattering. "Bobbie, if you pull Mina's hair once more I thrash you so you cannot sit down. Hush, sweetest blossom of a baby, Mama wasn't talking to you, but to those bad, bad brothers of yours."

Young Eben loved the gaiety, the easy comfort, and the racket. Old Eben had grumbled at being dragged over to tea, saying he didn't like eating in such a commotion but really, like all the rest, getting fun and vitality out of the presence of jolly

Mrs. Hoffman, and basking in the wide maternity she spread over the earth.

Small Maraquita, the Hoffman's eldest child, was a year young Eben's junior, born after they had fled from Ichang with Eben, a baby stained brown. They would not have had to do so to little Quita, as they called her, with her olive skin. Young Eben often told her so. Some of her brothers and sisters were fair like Hoffman, but Quita and the last baby were like their mother. Portuguese, their mother said with pride, but Margaret detected signs of the Chinese blood taken into this Portuguese family back in the first days of trading and settlement in Macao. While enjoying her friend's lively talk over the tea-table, placed to-day in the garden, Margaret made a firm resolve that young Eben should be sent to America for his education. But not now. After all the years of struggle and loneliness, not necessary to tear her very heart out of her in parting from her boy just yet.

However, that night up in their chamber Margaret talked to Eben about it. He gave her little satisfaction. "What do you want to send the boy away for? What'd you do without him? Nonsense. Worryin' about Hoffman's girl. They're just children. But if you're so worried, I'll take the boy on a trip or two up the river with me. Now that's an idea." He slapped his great thigh. "Keep the boy on the bridge with me. Teach him early about the river." He glanced sidewise to see how Margaret

took this. He enjoyed stirring her up a bit. This settled life in Ichang was almost too tame. His real existence lay in those dashes up-river. Ah, the excitement, the risk, the danger, eyes piercing the morning fog, running the gorges—devils' cauldrons—at freshet time, eyes narrowed, a nice use of helm. Ah, feel the imprint of the wheel on his palm now.

"Oh, no, not yet, not yet. Let him have his childhood first, Eben," she pleaded.

Eben did not press the point. It was nice to have her happy. Plenty of time. Wait until next summer to take the boy on the river if it worried her, but she needn't think he'd be soft about his son's going on the river when the moment really came.

Margaret said no more about Quita who, at nine, was a charming child, gay and laughing and always mothering something. No danger to him yet. Any more than the river. Margaret watched and saw that her son was indifferent to both—not listening when his father talked about the day when he would make him one of his captains; shaking off Quita's hand when she trotted solicitously after him with his sun helmet.

But when the two children were far down in the garden away from their elders, then Eben liked to feel Quita's delicate, boneless hand in his. Once as they rested under a cherry tree—Quita all afternoon had patiently done as he bade her—he had told her he might marry her when he became a river captain, if she would always do as he said.

VI

IT was only lately that he decided that he would be a river captain instead of a barber. Just a few nights before, he had awakened to find the sheet under him burning like fire and his pillow soaked with perspiration. With anger befitting the young master, he climbed out of bed to go in search of his *punkah* coolie. He was going to use those words which Fu had taught him. He stepped out on the veranda. It was empty, the coolie's stool overturned. The *punkah* rope was dangling from its hole in the wall. He'd ring for Fu. But something stopped him. He noticed the red chalk cliffs across the river, lighted by a faint glow coming from somewhere at their backs. On the river everything seemed asleep: the hooded junks, the gunboats, white and silent. Suddenly there was a great blast of sound. He jumped. Then he saw the boat which his father captained move out from the other river craft, start for the gorges, that mysterious place which his Uncle Hoffman pictured to him as so exciting and his mother as so terrible. A shiver went through him. He was going to have a hand in beating that old river.

Since then, the river noises—his mother complained of them—excited him so that he could not sleep. They were not far away and faint as in the

winter. They seemed almost in the room. If the wind was right he could hear the bells of the watches on the gunboats. He would shut his eyes and dream he was riding a ship, as he often pictured himself riding those dragons Mo Mo was always seeing in the clouds. But it was not going to be an ugly tow-boat, but something slim and white and beautiful. True son of his father—despising the present. Certain he could do better. How his father would have gloated had he known. No good now for Margaret to pray that her son should not come under the power of the river.

VII

YOUNG Eben was growing like his father, with the same powerful shoulders and the light treading feet. The "Small Tiger" the servants affectionately called him when he was not about, for this man-child was the idol of the household down to the lowliest coolie.

Each day this coolie brought the fifty carries of water up from the river. Balancing himself carefully as he ascended the ladder that led to the highest of three massive stone jars half full of pebbles, charcoal, and cocoanut bark, he poured into it the silt-laden water, from first one and then the other of the buckets suspended from the ends of a pole across his shoulder. Slowly it trickled down through a

spigot into the second jar, then into the lowest jar of all, at last clear as crystal.

Even when young Eben threw dirt into the cleared water, although the coolie had to dip it out and carry it laboriously to the top again, he smiled good-naturedly. But Fu did not smile. He clouted young Eben over the ears. But he could not let the man-child eat bitterness very long. He approached him where he sat outside the kitchen door, his head in his hands. "Small Master," he addressed him, "come, look, see. My makee plenty fine cake. You wanchee pink top-side?"

Young Eben nodded, dried his tears, and followed into the kitchen, entranced to see Fu dye the frosting a beautiful pale pink, by dipping into it very carefully, until he had the right shade, the tassel at the end of his queue.

VIII

DROWSING in its ancient pattern that summer, the city of Ichang steeped in its own contentment. There was no pestilence as sometimes, no cholera. Fecundity and fertility. The stream of life flowing on like the bright river, so high, so wide. East and West almost meeting in Ichang that summer. A new chapter in the relations of yellow and white. The city grown rich with the shipping.

Winter—with the tugs and lighters high on the

shore, the river given back to the junkmen. But progress and machinery creeping over the land; railways, one or two, in other parts of the country. Men from the West talking of a railroad to lead through the mountains to the rich province of Szechuan. Offering money to build it.

The Dragon Throne listened, but the Szechuanese murdered the representative sent to them.

IX

ONE night in spring, when all the hills were turning green and the peach trees bloomed around every mountain hut and in his Aunt Maraquita's garden, young Eben was wakened by his mother. She was shaking him and crying: "Quick, dear. Wake up, wake up. Something terrible is happening." Getting sleepily out of bed he stood by his father at the window, looking down over the city. The moon was riding in and out of the clouds; great fires blazed in the streets. At uneven intervals, guns went off. His mother trembled and clung to his father, begging him to hide them.

Young Eben at his heels, old Eben strode through the house, darkening the rooms. There was a hurried knocking at the back gate which opened on the side street. Fu reported. "At the gate, Master, Mr. Liu allee wife. Plenty tlouble, Master. Szechuan man wanchee kill all rich Chinaman, all official, because have talkee railway."

"Humph," said old Eben. "Got to get 'em in, but dangerous."

Cautiously Fu slid back the gate bolt. The Liu family, huddled and scared, carrying their treasures and their babies, filed silently in. Young Eben glimpsed Little Flower, no longer pretty, pale and dull-eyed; Mo Mo, close to his father; and all those women. The mysterious courts had at last given them up.

X

NO one thought at the time that the sacking of Ichang by the Szechuanese would be the prelude to revolution. But such defiance of the Dragon Throne stirred men to boldness. Up and down the river, revolutionists gathered, at first secretly, then openly. That autumn, just before the shipping people laid up their steamers for the winter, Hankow fell to the revolutionists. Then Ichang declared her independence. Wearing a white arm-band, meaning "dare-to-die in the cause of liberty," men went about the streets shooting at sight the soldiers who did not wear the insignia of the new order.

The shattered pattern; vainly Mr. Liu and others tried to put it together again.

"Shameful," said Fu Ling, coming home from a trip through the city. He would hold to the old ways; so would Mr. Liu. But the next morning when Fu went cautiously forth, a soldier sprang out at

the corner with a long pair of shears and cut off his queue—a sign of bondage to the Manchus. Fu sat brooding in his room, shorn of his dignity. For days Mr. Liu did not come to the office, fearful lest the same fate overtake him. But after a time, he called the barber to his house and had his queue removed.

XI

CHINA was a republic! A president lived in the yellow imperial city; the old China New Year, set to the slow rhythms of the moon, was given up. The severe literary examinations were abolished; no one need prepare to be an official now. The pattern of thousands of years, now brittle with age, taken in the hands of impetuous youth, was thrown down and destroyed. Reforms and progress. The West. Give us the secret of power from the West.

It was an anxious time for the shipping people. No one knew what would happen next, and Eben gave way to Margaret's pleading and sent his son to America. He could afford it. Why not? Fit the boy to take his master's papers by the time he came of age.

"*Ai-yah,*" murmured Fu Ling, "stumbling on bad times." First he had suffered the indignity of losing his queue, and now they had taken young Master away from him. He came to Margaret begging for leave to go back to Ningpo, his ancestral home. He

wanted to see his family. He must regain his composure. "One month, Missie," he begged.

XII

MARGARET yearned for young Eben's return, treasuring his letters in the safe where years ago she had put the baby garments against the day of his birth. In the beginning, his letters were homesick. He did not like America, begged to come home. The first letter of all could hardly be read now—wet with her son's tears and then with her own—but she knew it by heart anyway. It ran:

DEAR MUMMIE:

Why did you dress me like a sissie when you sent me to America? Didn't you know Americans don't wear Eton jackets and sun helmets? I wore mine and carried my sandalwood fan Mo Mo gave me and went for a walk on Boston Commons and the boys laughed at me and I did not know why. Then I found out and I don't like school and I don't like Aunt Esther's house. I like China better than America and please send me enough money to come home. No more this time. Your dutiful son,

EBEN HAWLEY, JR.

P.S. Oh mummie dear, please send the money right away and I can start in two months. It takes that long for a letter.

But how could she have known about American boys? Resentment rose within her against her hus-

band who had never taken her to her own country.

The letters grew shorter. He was happy; liked America. His pictures showed a little boy with a big bow-tie under his chin growing into a young man with unfamiliar clothes and hair parted in the middle. Would she know him if she suddenly met him on the street, she wondered, with anguish.

Fu was always hanging round the door when the mail came in from America. "*Ai-yah!* Young Master plenty fine boy." His immobile features broke into a smile when he said it. Then he would call *amah* to look. But there were two of young Eben's pictures which in some mysterious way were lost. Margaret asked Fu about them. "I no savee, Missie." He scolded the number-two house boy soundly for his carelessness, but they were never found. Silly of Missie not to know that he, Fu Ling Ting, must have a picture of young master to display in every tea-house. And the other, of course, was in Master's wallet, which he carried in the inside pocket of his vest. Fu Ling Ting, arranging Master's clothes, had seen it there.

XIII

THE years passed. No great man appeared to hold the country together; some of the provinces, like Szechuan, declared themselves independent. Mission schools, government schools were full of

young Chinese, studying the ways of the Occident. They sailed for America, England, avid to know what made the West so strong.

But the lethargic mass of the people, caring little whether there was a monarch or a president in Peking, slipped back into the old customs. They lived by the authority of the patriarchal family, the village father. Not quite the ancient pattern. The military growing; no longer a disgrace to be a soldier. License now, too; no longer the strict laws about opium. A common man could declare himself a governor of a province if he could buy soldiers to fight for him! And opium revenues helped.

Opium was now a dark thread woven into the unfolding drama of the river. In sickness, in health, in poverty, in wealth; the rising of governors and their downfall; in lootings; in sorrow, happiness, death—it was there, pidgin cargo.

XIV

OUT of the mistakes and wrecks, gradually the shipping people evolved a steamer that would conquer the summer river. At last the ideal—a twin-screw steamer built of mild flexible steel, with a draft not exceeding six feet on an even keel when laden, with four hundred horse-power to master a river with twice the force of Niagara Falls. A little flotilla of these steamers now flew the house-flag of Eben Hawley—the Chinese character for *Feng*

Shui (good joss of wind and water) in white on a background of blue.

With the boom in shipping after the World War, everything Eben touched turned to gold. Suppose he had listened to Margaret's premonitions of evil and that silly nonsense about bats. Bats! He had to laugh his heavy laughter when he thought about it. Where would he be now if he had paid attention to her? Kept his promise to the tea merchant. Wish the old fellow could see Margaret now. Made her rich as he said he would. Yes, siree. Make her richer.

Eben owned the company now; he had bought Hoffman out just after the war when China "repatriated" all the Germans. He'd paid Hoffman a good price and yet sometimes he wasn't quite comfortable when he thought about the deal. Still, a business man had to look out for his own interests, and there was young Eben, seventeen now, over in the States. He must have the best possible training for the shipping business.

In time, the Germans began filtering back to China, trying to pick up their old position in trade, and Hoffman, with Maraquita and the children, nine of them now, straggling behind in steps, suddenly appeared at the office asking to be taken into the firm again. Eben told him it was impossible—not to be expected. Hoffman had no money, and three years in detention camps had made him an old man. Instead, Eben offered him a job as chief engineer on one of his steamers. Hoffman was grateful.

Captain Eben Hawley walked now with the step of the conquerer, treading light as in his youth. All men respected him, many feared him, some hated him.

Junkmen working slowly up through the rapids brooded over Eben and his fire-spouting boats which disturbed the joss of wind and water, adding a new menace, the wash of the steamer, which in the narrowest gorges did not subside for an hour; taking their pilots, who could not be trained in a day, taking the ones with two decades of knowledge, to guide their fire-boats. With eyes full of dark broodings, the junkmen looked at the steamers. But the trackers felt differently; they took service as deck-hands, doubling, trebling their wages.

From the mountains where bands of brigands had gathered, often some bandit chief lay on the rocks and with envious eyes looked down on the steamers and nursed his grudge. Would-be governors bought them to act as soldiers. And some of them overthrew their masters and became governors themselves. In case of defeat, they knew how fast they could retreat down the highway of the river if they dared commandeer the steamers.

Secure in well-being, careless of the attitude of the bandits and the junkmen, Eben seemed to himself a young man, although he was getting on in his sixties. But a man was as old as he felt. No time to think about his age. This was as breathless a business as the races of the old tea-clippers, these ships of his hurrying the silk down through the gorges to

be sent to Shanghai and foreign ports. Szechuan silk wanted by all the world.

But success was a funny thing, never brought satisfaction. The old hunger was still there to push him on—the curse of pioneers.

Part IV

Banner Years

I

IT was a November evening, twenty-seven years since Eben first came in sight of Ichang and the junks huddled beyond the sand spit. Once again the river had made her spectacular drop of a hundred feet. Once again Ichang was perched like a giant eagle's nest at the top of the embankment, the same untidy eagle's nest—refuse heaps spilling over the edge, black uneven veins of drainage running over them.

Seen from the river, the city itself had now taken on an almost modern look, no longer shut behind a medieval wall. But when you climbed the cliff and came to the flat top of the Bund, it resolved itself into the same alley-like streets, scurrying away into the dim recesses of the city. The faint light produced by an over-worked electric current left shadowed passages and dark interiors as before.

As for two thousand years, junkmen and trackers, making ready for their winter struggle with the river, purchased cocks for the blood sacrifice, incense for the wayside shrines; sat in the tea-shops discussing the divination of wind and water. In the black cavern of the river, tom-toms, cymbals, and fire-crackers still beat back the evil spirits from the stream of life, from the subterranean stream of life

after death. Fertility and abundance as of old, the one cry of men's hearts.

Nevertheless, over the river and the city sounded the staccato note of machinery. Steamers had been put on the winter run. Captain Eben Hawley had himself designed a special type of boat to meet the problems of low water: the swifter races in the narrowed channels, crooked fairways, new reefs of silt built during the last summer freshets and always shifting.

In this, Eben had taken the lead, no mere imitator as he had been in the summer navigation. Now at last, even as his heart desired, all his days set to the quick beat of machinery, to the pulsation of steam in his boats. Every month of the year, his blue and white house-flag now flaunted his conquest of the gorges. Almost was he satisfied.

To-night marked the high tide of his success, a dozen steamers on the summer river, five on the winter river, and all the other companies operating winter steamers after his design. Margaret was giving a dinner to-night, twofold in its purpose: to celebrate his sixty-seventh birthday and to welcome their son just back from America with Eileen, his bride. From far down-river the house stood forth like a beacon shining brightly. Eben's private electric plant, not the over-taxed city system, working at full load to-night, gave to the house a vibration like a ship throbbing under its engine, and lighted it from top to bottom.

Even the offices were to be used for cloak rooms,

for Margaret was entertaining all of the important members of white Ichang, a not inconsiderable number, what with the consuls of three great powers, the commanders and lieutenants of these countries' gunboats lying at anchor in the river, the customs people, representatives of five shipping companies, wood-oil and piece-goods firms, and the great oil concerns. When Margaret counted the names on her list, she found she had forty. That was why she could not invite Hoffman and Maraquita. Just not room; she had had to crowd the table even to get Quita in. Safe to invite Quita, now that Eben was married.

Margaret, spots of color in either rather thin cheek, was moving about the house from parlor to dining-room, from dining-room to parlor, nervously straightening a pillow on the sofa, arranging for the twentieth time the place-cards on the long dining-table.

"What did you say?" shouted Eben to Margaret from the depths of the pantry. "Can't hear you while I'm shaking this cocktail. Yes, I told you once. Of course the skipper of the *Palos* is to sit at your right. Yes, and Eileen at my right, even if she is my own son's wife. Who's giving this party, anyway? For once I'm going to have it my own way." With his old-time energy, he popped out of the pantry door, coatless, shirt snowy white, its immaculate bosom already in a ridge.

Margaret summoned Fu Ling to refold the napkins in the glasses, as their frills, like stiff nosegays, did not suit her. Keeping his calm exterior, Fu did

as he was bidden, trying to be in two places at once, for the Captain called him also.

By his mere presence to-night, Fu Ling Ting marked the dinner as an event of extraordinary moment. Only at such times did he appear in the dining-room at all. Then by means of a broad belt he laced his great paunch into a passably straight front so he could move with dignity about the crowded room. For at sixty, he was the perfect ideal of what a Chinese should be, full of face and figure. He had become a privileged character in the big house on the Bund, doing little work, only overseeing the younger boys from behind the scenes and berating them when they exceeded the time-honored custom of ten per cent *squeeze*. "A trick of these trifling youngsters." Because of them, no peace did he ever have, the legitimate peace of an old man, for Fu, unlike Eben, considered himself an old man.

Yes, indeed, it was a great occasion—the return of the young Master. He and Master both rich now. He told the new house-boys that in another year, who knows, he might be needed to look after a third master. "Very handsome young master." As to the young Missie, he had not quite made up his mind about her—"Head-held-high-in-the-wind-girl." But then, in Fu's estimation, it would have been hard to find any one worthy of young Master. Still it was well he was married. This girl looked strong, as white people went, and he, Fu Ling Ting, was getting old. If the proper care was to be given of a new master it was high time young Eben married.

II

UP in the high-ceilinged bedroom of his childhood, young Eben gazed at his wife. He had dismissed the *amah* (who had gone away highly offended at her banishment) and was himself assisting Eileen with her gown. So cool and lovely she looked that Eben's admiration was tinged with fear.

"Are you going to like it, Eileen, darling? It does seem quite out of the world now we are back. I didn't mean to mislead you when I told you about it. I was awfully homesick for it all then. It takes hold of you after a time." He felt his heart turning to water. Would he be able to hold her, so beautiful? On the steamer coming out, she had made her own terms with him, spending whole evenings with other men.

"Well," said Eileen, "I'll have to see. Something sort of rummy about it. Just hear those dogs. Do they always bark like that?"

Young Eben listened. "Oh, those are the *wonks*. There are thousands of them in every Chinese city. Half-starved mangy dogs, attacking each other in the night. Does sound kind of queer."

"Oh, I have to be happy," said Eileen. But the question remained unanswered.

Young Eben's heart turned from water to fire. He gripped and pressed her body against his own

tall frame until the one button of his dinner coat bruised her breast, then flung her from him.

She was radiant now. If her husband had been more like this on the steamer, instead of going off to sulk, she would not have teased him so often, staying upstairs after he had gone off to their cabin.

Not alone to Fu and young Eben was Eileen the focal point of interest this evening. By half-past eight, in nearly every foreign house but Eben Hawley's the lights were out, save in the servants' quarters or some upstairs room, dimly lighted, where an *amah* tended a child. Around the gates was a stir of departure. These usually blasé party-goers—for there was a function nearly every night in Ichang—to-night rode off eagerly to pass judgment on Captain Hawley's son and his bride, especially his bride.

III

IN the front bedroom, where Captain Eben Hawley with energetic movements got into his dinner coat, Margaret was saying, "What do you think of her, Eben?"

"Who? Oh, Eben's wife. Why, all right, I guess. Haven't had a chance to see much of her yet."

"Well, but what is your first impression?" urged Margaret. No answer. The captain was off down the long stairs to greet his guests.

Margaret followed more slowly, the spots of color in her cheeks deeper now. She was troubled, made introspective by the return of her son and his bride. A quarter of a century she had lived in this house overlooking the river, treading these stairs to its varying moods: its rises, its falls, its dangers, and at last its sweet mood of success. Carefully she had built round herself the conventional world of her youth. As it rose she came to feel contented, then safe, then complacent. And now to-day this girl's cool scrutiny had taken out of her life the sense of satisfaction it had gathered of late.

Ever since her first sense of defeat had passed, when she found her husband had outwitted her and apprenticed her son on a steamer running out of Boston, she had centered all her plans on young Eben's return. She had lived in him and for the day when he would be hers once more. When he had cabled, just before he sailed for China, that he was married, she had felt only happiness, added assurance of his settling down among them. But to-day when she had seen Eileen she had had some intuition that the girl would take her son away. She'd be left here without him, for she knew with certainty that she herself would never get away.

This desire in her husband to conquer more and more of the river would be fierce and strong in him when his body had succumbed to the weakness of old age. And she would never be secure. What recently she had been pleased to call security—success and the position it had brought them—was not security.

Under it lay the foolhardy daring, the risk, the uncertainty of earlier days.

Like a chronic sickness, there settled back over her her old fear of disaster. The river, smiling upon man for long periods of time until even he forgot and trusted, then sweeping from its cruel bosom the futile handiwork of man. The yellow race, a great force like the river, engulfing the white man finally. All at once she saw the Chinese, as once already in her lifetime she had seen them, awaking from their passive sufferance, awaking to violent hate. All this, like a blinding vision, passed before her as she reached the landing, going down to celebrate the high tide of their success.

Margaret had reached the last step and must go in to her guests. She had been a long time coming down the stairs. To be late like this was unpardonable. But no. When she entered she found Eben alone, pacing up and down the room between the window and the heavy secretary—brought by her mother to Shanghai from New England—the route he had taken so often when working out plans, swallowing defeat, gloating over success.

He was not looking back over the years. Not he! He was seeing the gorges and just where each of his ships was anchored to-night. He was planning just how he would break his son into the business. Better send him up the gorges this winter on a junk. Study the river, learn to know all its kinks, only way to begin. Then on a steamer. Then learn the summer river. Eileen would not like that. Might rebel. She

was a fiery little piece. Well, both of them would have to be broken in.

Back and forth from the secretary to the closed dining-room doors he walked. Once he opened the window and let in the faint voice of the river, lying far below at its winter level. So absorbed was he that he did not realize that Margaret had entered and, after her, his son and his son's wife.

IV

EILEEN stood among the guests, looking out of place, so stamped was she with modern America. She examined the little community as if she were observing a spectacle in which she had no part. And the community examined her. The room buzzed with their voices.

"Meet my daughter, meet my son," said the captain, as if he were giving orders from the bridge. "Mrs. Hawley, Jr., Captain French of *The Gnat,* my dear . . . Cap'n Jones, *The Palos,* y'know . . . Mrs. Hawley, Mr. Hawley, Mrs. Sterling and Mr. Sterling." "The British consul," Margaret whisperered in Eileen's ear, as the Sterlings turned away. How seriously all these people took themselves, thought Eileen. What was the wave of excitement on which she was being carried along?

Fu Ling, in a glory of long white coat, white cloth stockings, his black oiled hair and black satin

shoes staccato notes in his costume, brought the cocktails in tiny silver tumblers on a black lacquer tray. Eileen realized, with a little inner smile, that he was not less a personage than all the other important people in the room. Younger boys, not so sternly immaculate, were passing hors-d'œuvres, opening the front door, taking the men's coats downstairs. Young Eben's former *amah,* as dignified as Fu Ling, stood at the top of the stairs leading to the bedrooms, taking the evening cloaks of the women. To *amah,* too, this was a great occasion—this return of her charge, grown into a man. Still they came—captains of steamers on the run between Hankow and Ichang, in port only for the night, leaving at dawn; a captain of one of the American oil boats which was unloading at that very moment into the tanks of the company; and his rival on the British boat, he was there too. The air buzzed with their conversation. The men had already gravitated toward one side of the room. The skippers were comparing their records of speed. "Had you last time, Hadley," called the American. "Beat you by an hour, you know."

Eileen stood with her mother-in-law among the women, thinking them the oddest group she had ever seen, athletic-looking English women, slender Americans in costumes made by the local tailor—gorgeous native materials oddly bunched and badly cut. There were queer little dark-skinned creatures who made her think of Chinese and white race at one and the same time. Of one of these, though Eileen

thought she was scarcely out of hearing, Margaret whispered, "Half-caste."

"Isn't he lovely," said the girl in one of the lulls in the chatter. Margaret considered herself rightly annoyed when she found Eileen was referring to Fu. It was perverse of Eileen, out of all this distinguished crowd, to pick out Fu to admire. Then she forgot her irritation, caught by the tenseness of the group around her husband. Eben held a telegram in his hand. Every one was clustering around him, no chance for him to conceal it.

"Just a little accident to my *Iping,*" he was saying. "Struck rocks thirty-three miles above Ichang."

"What a pity, and on this evening, of all times," some one near Margaret murmured.

Fu announced dinner, and they all moved off toward the dining-room. In her excitement and worry, Margaret forgot about Eileen. What would the accident mean to Eben? She caught bits of conversation flying about the table.

"Bad beginning for the season. Wonder how it happened?"

A damper had been put upon the party, until Captain Hawley rose, saying: "Are we cast down? No. I make a toast to my new daughter."

"The new daughter, the new Mrs. Eben," the guests cried, and stood to drink the sparkling wine, just as their host waved a second telegram, shouting: "Hear, hear! *'Iping* not badly damaged. Filled leaks with cement. Am proceeding. (Signed) Sutton.' "

"Toast to Sutton!" shouted the British consul.

"Finish the first toast!" some one called out, and they drank to Eileen, then to Sutton. Eileen touched glasses with her father-in-law, then with a young lieutenant. Eben Junior leaned forward just in time to see his wife and the lieutenant looking into each other's eyes.

Perhaps now, for this evening they could forget the steamers and talk of other things, thought Margaret. "No shop," she admonished the commander of the gunboat at her right and the British consul at her left.

"All right," they promised good-naturedly, but they did not stop. Up and down the table went talk of the river. Valiantly Margaret strove to draw first one and then another into more general conversation, reaching out for those near her son. Let the evening for him, at least, be free from the river. There was time enough for him to be submerged in its interests and anxieties. But as she chattered, she caught scraps of conversation carried on around him.

"Pidgin cargo? Yes, it seems to be growing."

"So you are starting up to-morrow?"

"Yes, six weeks' trip by junk."

"How are the soldiers in Szechuan behaving? Do they bother the steamers?"

And so on and on. She saw far at the other end of the table her son's wife drawn into the little knot around her husband. Without hearing, Margaret knew what they were discussing. The river. For a quarter of a century Eben had spoken of little else. Well, it was happy talk to-night, since the accident

had not proved to be serious. They were successful. Let it go. Through their veins flowed the wine and the thrill of success.

Margaret heard the high clear voice of her daughter-in-law saying: "I don't understand. Don't you ever get away from here, once you come? Do you always talk about the river?" It was in one of those lulls in the general conversation and her words carried down the table. Every one was listening.

"Don't need to," answered Captain Hawley. "Plenty of excitement here."

"Yes, but—" protested Eileen.

Then some one laughed and said, " 'Yes, but'—that's just it."

"May I come in, Mrs. Captain?" asked a voice from the doorway.

"Well, I'll be damned," said Captain Hawley under his breath, and aloud, "Come in, Myers."

"Who is he?" asked Eileen of the lieutenant at her right. "Father looks as if he had seen a ghost."

"Worse than a ghost. It's his agent," her neighbor whispered back.

"Sorry to interrupt, but thought I'd better report to you, sir," said the man. "The *Chi Lai* is wrecked."

Sudden silence extinguished conversation.

"Shall we go into the other room and leave the men to their coffee?" Margaret's faintly-spoken words rang loudly in the stillness. But no one moved. All wanted to hear the news. Margaret realized that there was no use trying to keep the women from learning the particulars about their trouble. The

men would tell them then anyway, she supposed.

"Just got in," went on the agent. "Came down by sampan. Nine hours. The thing happened soon after we started this morning. We hit the rocks just where *The Iping* did. You know there's a rock—"

"Never mind about the rock. What happened?" demanded Captain Hawley, breaking in impatiently, dragging an old pipe out of his pocket and lighting it. He saw nothing now but his ship aground in that very place, that fatal place, where *The Endeavor* had been wrecked in her first season.

"Well, you see, sir," the agent continued, "it was a kind of argument between the pilot on the steamer and that sampan-man at the rapid."

"Sampan holds a position just over the rock when steamers pass to show them where it is," the man sitting across from young Hawley explained to him.

"The pilot, what was he doing?" barked Hawley. "Best Chinaman on the river."

"It seems he thought the sampan was too far out," answered the agent, "and he shouted to the fellow in the sampan to pull in a little. The sampan-man shouted back that he was directly over the rock. Well, you know the stubbornness of these Chinamen: the pilot refused to lose face by changing course. And the sampan fellow was right, and the next thing we knew we felt our insides being torn out by that rock. We listed heavily to port as she rode up on it. Ship pretty well out of control, one engine busted, but by running the other engine full

speed, skipper managed to back her off. Neat work, beached her on that shelving shingle-bank up there just as she was about to sink."

"Thanks, Myers. Can't do anything more until morning. Sit down and have some port." Captain Hawley's eyes were streaked with yellow and his hand trembled as he put his pipe back into his pocket, but he remarked quietly, "I expected to lose a ship or two." Eileen could not help but admire the old man.

Margaret rose now, and all the other women followed her, last of all, Quita. Her slim figure, her mouse-like attire in the midst of all the gay plumage, caught young Eben's attention. Something infinitely pathetic in her expression caused him to smile reassuringly at her. At that, the familiar Quita looked out of her eyes, the dear companion of his youth. It was of Quita he was thinking as the men settled down to their port and their smoking. Above the talk of growing disorder in China, the rise and fall of war-lords, and the wreck of the *Chi Lai,* from the other side of the closed doors he caught her soft Latin voice.

Eben studied his father's face. Plucky, his father. But why hadn't this bad luck happened to one of the big companies? Their agents at the table, calmly drinking his father's port, could afford to be calm. Still, about them, too, were the marks of strain. Not even did the tension lessen when they joined the women and exchanged business for bridge and poker. Every one played a cutthroat game, big stakes.

V

YOUNG Hawley was down for breakfast with his father at the usual hour—the old breakfast hour of his childhood, half-past six. His father had made it plain to him that no extra day would be given for a vacation.

Just the two men at the table. Eileen was asleep. His mother was not there, as in the past. She stayed in bed mornings, nowadays. He realized that she had aged in the ten years he had been gone. But not his father. After the young house-boy had turned off the shaded electric lights necessary for the early breakfast, and drawn aside the heavy red curtains, he looked, in the pitiless light of the morning, even younger than Eben had remembered. Success had been to his father like some fountain of youth. His blue eyes had the same steely glint as of old, and his habitual high color was accentuated by his shock of white hair, not silky, old-looking white hair, but vibrant, stiff white hair that seemed to have nothing to do with age.

After breakfast they went downstairs to the offices. Everywhere Eben noticed signs of expansion: most of the third floor and a small addition at the back were filled with clerks and accountants; the front corner, where his father used to have his desk, was partitioned off from the rest of the room. "My private sanctum," the captain announced proudly.

Immediately his father was absorbed into the business of the day, arranging for help to be sent to the *Chi Lai*. Young Eben sat beside him, watching, trying to grope his way back, find guide-posts to direct him in this country of his birth. To him it was a China entirely unfamiliar. He knew only the old China of the monarchy. Then the Chinese in his father's office were grave, punctilious men in long silk coats falling to their heels, trousers tied precisely around their ankles with rich black bands of silk, queues neatly plaited, reaching below their waists. Never was one seen without his tight-fitting black satin cap. Everything had been ceremonious. There had been only the guttural Chinese spoken. Occasionally a high official, in sedan chair, with outriders on ponies, had called at his father's office. In small-boy fashion, Eben had hung around to see the gorgeous excellency in stiffly-embroidered robes, black hat with the button of his rank, step forth from his chair.

This morning, in these same offices, there was hardly a vestige of that China, country of old men, reverence of age and tradition. These were all young men from his own generation, boys just out of their teens, dressed in rather informal Chinese clothes, about them a tendency to carelessness, a tendency he had noticed in the house-boys the night before. Their trousers were loose, untied at the ankles; their hair, unoiled, was stiff and unruly. Dressed as only the lower classes would have been ten years before. Some of them wore foreign clothes, rather badly he

thought, obviously uncomfortable in the rough, scratchy woolens after being used to the soft silks of their own race. Gone, too, were the well-schooled manners. These youths, careless, nonchalant, had a vestige of insolence in their manner even toward his father. They spoke English with a ridiculous mingling of the stilted phraseology of textbooks and the clipped, very useful and understandable Pidgin-English of former days.

"Where is Mr. Liu?" he asked his father. He would be one landmark.

"Oh, he'll be in later. Takes life pretty easy. Only my personal adviser around here now."

"Where's Mo Mo?" asked young Eben, picking up the threads of his old life.

"Don't bother me now with questions," commanded his father, waving him aside.

So young Eben sat still and watched.

The office was an astounding place, as full of excitement as a stock exchange: river captains, funny old cards, coming in to lay down their orders as to what they would or would not do; Captain Hawley banging his fists on the table and, with profanity second to none, telling them just what he expected of them. "Now no chances taken with my ships, I tell ye, just so as to beat Hanigan in Lynn & Lynn's. I want no daredevils. We've got devil enough in the river. I'll know if ye do. I'll know. Now here's this lesson of the *Chi Lai* and *Iping* to warn ye. I can't have any more."

Young Eben strolled over to the window. He

wondered when he would be captain of one of his father's ships. For this he had toiled at sea, worked for his first mate's papers, granted two months ago in San Francisco. Yesterday the river had looked dull, muddy, and forbidding, but already it was calling to him. As he stood there watching the shipping, he realized that the upper river had been the core of his childhood: his father when at home always with his eyes on the river; Hoffman with his booming voice telling him and Quita of the wreck of *The Endeavor;* his mother teaching him to pray at night for God to save his father from disaster; his Chinese playfellows half frightening him with their talk of the dragon who ruled the water; the junkmen gathered together in a knot, telling cruel tales which made young Eben lie awake later full of horror.

He could see again the sick tracker, with his bowl of rice, whom the junkman had left on a rock in midstream. He would need only the one bowlful before the river rose and swept him away. At each succeeding festival in commemoration of the drowned, when the water was strewn with thousands of paper flowers, with their centers a leaping tongue of flame, young Eben would picture the bottom of the river strewn with thousands of brown men, half-naked, as he had seen them scrambling over the rocks, lying there in groups even as the paper flowers floated in groups, men in the wide blue trousers of the trackers, with their bare breasts washed by the water, all serene, quiet like the dead men ready

for burial he often saw in the huts of the poor. But the sick man of the rock he always saw with his eyes wide with terror. He never thought of white men lying in the river. They were different, someway.

At last his father turned to him, saying: "The *Liling* sails up to-morrow morning. You'll make one round trip with her skipper, then you are to go up by junk and make your own map of the river." There was a secret gleam in old Eben's eyes. His life on the river was now lengthened out by another forty years or so. He simply could not conceive, even as he thought of his son carrying on the business after his death, of its not being himself who did it.

VI

UNTIL he thought of Eileen, young Eben was elated over the orders. She would not like being left here with the "old people," as she persisted in calling them. He wondered if she would consider going with him. His mother had gone with his father on his first trip . . . that first time he went up the river in the junk. But somehow he could not imagine Eileen doing it. Eileen troubled him up here. She seemed out of place, her cropped red-brown hair, her smart frocks, and that craving of hers to have fun. But when he thought of her mouth he forgot his trouble. Lovely lips parted, his own crushing them. The hot passion of his love left no

room for any other feeling. He ascended the stairs to their room to tell her his father's plans.

She was sitting up among the pillows, having her breakfast, while his old *amah* hovered around her. Gay, like a little child, was Eileen this morning, using the Chinese words he had taught her to get *amah* to wait on her, laughing with glee at *amah's* surprise.

Eben sat down on the bed beside her, sending *amah* away. He felt a pang of remorse that he had brought her here. It was going to be hard for her.

"Got my orders." He tried to say it nonchalantly.

"For what?" She smiled at him above the rim of her coffee-cup.

"From Captain Hawley." He told her the plan.

"That won't do." Her response was decisive. "I'm not for any of it. Neither for going with you, nor having you go. The office is the place for you."

"But darling—"

"No 'buts' about it," she interrupted him. "One woman broken by this old shipping business is enough in this family." And she climbed lightly across his knees, steadying herself by placing her hand on his head, jumped to the floor, and began to dress. He thought she looked like a bright butterfly casting off its wings, as she threw off the coat of her yellow silk pajamas.

"What do you mean?" he asked, pondering her last words.

"Mean?" She glanced up at him with some surprise. "Is it possible that you don't see what price

your mother has paid for her present luxurious setting? I got that before I'd been in the house two hours. Ugh!" Eileen shivered before the fire sputtering in the grate. "Not so luxurious either, just a tiny bit chilly around the edges. Eben, old boy, do you think we might do this room over into something light?"

She had changed the subject and she would not allow him to reopen it.

On their way down to *tiffin,* Eileen stopped at the window on the landing to stare down at the Bund, the long line of coolies carrying water.

"Eee-ya, eee-ya, eh-ho."

"Song of the river, I suppose," she said, and raised her brows in comical fashion. "A little monotonous, but better than those *wonks* barking all night. Kind of hungry sound, that. And your old river. Think you overdid it a little when you told me about it. Not so very beautiful." There was a catch in her voice.

"Poor kid," thought young Eben as they went on. "She doesn't like it, but she's trying to be game."

Eileen, ahead, was saying to herself: "Now don't be a fool, little Eileen. We don't cry since the War. And you know you would not mind your mother when she told you to wait, but ran away and married him." Why were mothers so often right? Very annoying of them.

"Eee-ya, eee-ya, eh-ho."

"Darn that song," she said out loud, as they entered the dining-room. "I'd like a livelier one."

Margaret, sitting at the head of the table, pouring the coffee, lifted her eyebrows ever so slightly.

VII

THAT afternoon young Eben prowled about the haunts of his childhood—aimlessly at first, for he was thinking of Eileen. She had dismissed him after *tiffin,* saying she had letters to write and did not want to see him until dinner-time. As he left her he had heard the key turn in the lock. Was she really going to stand out against his work?

But gradually he forgot Eileen and their argument, grew absorbed in his groping for something he could not find. Every street he went down seemed to hold what he sought, but in spite of all the old landmarks he could not find it. When he was a little boy he had been one with these people. They had loved him, he had loved them. He had had a real perception of how Mo Mo, and the gateman's son, and the street urchins, even Fu and Mr. Liu, looked at life. Now he felt himself an outsider. Just before he went to America he had been a little scornful of his father for being unable to see things as the Chinese saw them, but now he, too, stood apart. Was it his own fault, or was it that, now that he was grown to man's estate, the yellow race had grown suspicious of him? He could not say.

He passed by the black door, the entrance to Mr.

Liu's house. So Mo Mo was in England at Oxford. Mr. Liu had told him that morning. No stopping there to-day. He was a grown man now and excluded from that life of the courts where, he would be willing to bet, other small sons of younger wives and concubines were growing up to worship Mr. Liu's tablet after death.

He climbed the hill and stood under the pagoda where he and Mo Mo used to spend so many happy hours. He looked down on the city, bigger and richer now than in his childhood. That was due to the steamers. But there were the same narrow streets where China's countless millions lived on the dark borderland between life and starvation: another beggar where Weeping Lulu used to be, other piles of garbage, other sows with their litters crowding the streets, other coolies carrying the dripping pails of water up from the river. Untouched really as two thousand years ago by that world he belonged to, that world of machinery.

Why was he seeing the city like this? What was the matter with him? Why did he stand off, criticizing? This was the city of his birth, to which he had longed to come back. Was it because he was seeing it as Eileen would see it? He felt something ominous in the change which had taken place, all this cutting loose from traditions. Too swift a change, he said. Democracy in a land with its people uneducated appeared to have brought license, not liberty.

In the place of the Son of Heaven, held account-

able to a heavenly monarch, a president who bought his office, feathered his nest from the public treasury, then slunk away with his ill-got gain, accountable to no one; govenors of provinces, ex-bandits, some of them, war-lords all of them, moving over the land, taking their funds from the poor and starving, their soldiers looting and pillaging as they had done right here in this city less than a month ago; the military, powerful in a land that once had given no honor to soldiers, reserving it all for the scholar and farmer. The military in the province of Szechuan, up there beyond the mountains, forcing the farmers to grow opium, then taxing them for growing it, then commandeering the crop. He felt a crumbling of the old moral fiber. His homecoming was not proving so happy as he had expected. He found his spirit "eating bitterness."

He fell to thinking of the youths in his father's office with their Western knowledge on top of their age-old superstitions, their ancient and beautiful philosophy, grasping at the standards of the Occident. And yet some intuition carried over from his childhood told young Eben that they resented the man from the West as their fathers had never resented him. Their fathers had despised the white man, no doubt in their minds that they were superior. Was their sons' more complicated attitude due to the fact that these youths had some smarting realization that the white man had his superiority too, some secret which lay hidden in machinery and efficiency which they could not grasp, a feeling of

injury that the West, augmented by machinery, had taken advantage of them?

If only, thought young Eben, East and West were not so suspicious of each other and would enter into mutual respect and confidence! What a pity that in the long history of trade between China and the West there was so much on both sides to deplore, the treachery of the East, the aggression of the West. What a pity that the first trade struggle should have centered around opium. Not that the white man had introduced it into the country. Opium was a racial curse, but the Occident had profited by the Chinese desire for it. What a pity that from the very first days of the tea trade, the Chinese had broken faith, treacherously killing the men who came to trade with them. If only both could forget and start over!

Young Eben felt himself a man with two countries: he wanted to explain the land of his birth to the land of his birthright, he wanted to illumine the land of his birthright to the land of his birth. Here, in the eagerness of his own young manhood, he wanted to stop these youths of China from using the things of the West to do them harm. Why did they misappropriate the great business of shipping for illegitimate gain?

Already he had sensed the deception going on in his father's office. He could not tell how he knew it; perhaps bits of knowledge acquired in his childhood gave him the clue. He remembered those small

sweet-smelling packages brought to the back door by members of the crew on his father's tugs and lighters. Small packages handed to Fu. They had seemed of little importance then, just cargo brought down without paying freight, a small *squeeze* not exceeding ten per cent.

What he had sensed this morning among the young clerks was something much more formidable, an illegitimate business without limit going on under the real business declared by manifest before the customs. How much, he said to himself, does my father know of this pidgin cargo carried in his ships? Taken on by whom—the clerks? The crews on the steamers? Fu? Mr. Liu? How much opium came secretly down the river to be sold in the cities of China?

Standing there under the pagoda, listening to the wind-bells, suddenly he was conscious of the tawny waters of the river, as before, coming down swiftly around the bend from out of that jumbled mass of mountains, an untamed power tempting both white and yellow men to live recklessly. He looked across at the red cliffs. How beautiful it all was in the November sunlight.

What a sentimental fool he was to be analyzing everything. What if his father did know about the pidgin cargo? If the Chinese wished to harm themselves with the stuff, no one could stop them. *Mei yu fatsu,* there is no way out, as the Chinese themselves would say. Why worry?

VIII

AT tea-time young Eben knocked at the Hoffmans' gate, led there by unerring instinct out of his childhood. He found Mrs. Hoffman in the garden among her chrysanthemums, the same jolly Aunt Maraquita. When she saw him, she came hurrying down the flag-path, brushing the younger children out of her way. She fell upon him, pulling his head down to hers and kissing him soundly upon the lips, then standing off and surveying him. "*Little* Eben, *little* Eben," she kept saying over and over, "the *little* baby I used to hold, grown so *tall* and *handsome*. My dear, my dear. Well, well. Come and see my chrysanthemums, fine as Liu's this year," and she started down the path, advancing unevenly by little starts.

She moved among the tall stalks with their heavy ragged heads, yellow and bronze, touching them gently as if they were precious children. And she touched young Eben's hand gently, too. Then she darted away toward the house, pulling him with her again. "Come, it's time for tea. Hot scones! Cake! All the things you liked when you were a little boy. I baked them myself this morning." Eben laughed with delight. Well, at last he had come home. At least his aunt was not changed.

"Quita, Quita," called Mrs. Hoffman, still a long way from the house. "Quita, it's little Eben."

The girl met them at the door. She looked cosmopolitan this afternoon, a blend of many civilizations. She had inherited the warm olive skin of her mother, the childlike quality of both her parents, but she was built like neither of them. Young Eben remembered the whisper that the Portuguese family from which her mother came had a drop of Chinese blood. To-day, in his mood of standing off and surveying everything, he scrutinized Mrs. Hoffman but could find no trace of the Oriental in her. But in Quita? Yes, it was there, in the little telltale fold at the corner of her eyes, in her delicate build, that certain arresting quality noticeable in upper-class Chinese girls. Something lonely, baffled, about her. With all her exquisiteness, young Eben knew enough of these little colonies to know that Quita's life had not been easy. During the War the suspicion under which all Germans suffered—and this drop of Chinese blood, which was a taint not alone in the eyes of the Occident, but in the eyes of the Chinese, too. She belonged nowhere.

But to him she was Quita, the playfellow of his childhood, sweet and lovable, a little disturbing to him in her beauty and fragile daintiness. Her soft relaxed fingers did not clasp his, as the strong hands of Eileen. They seemed to melt away in his grasp.

After tea, Maraquita took him out to the golf links—white Ichang's pride. It occupied the site of the proposed railway into the great west of China which had been blocked in Eben's childhood. Afterward, the Szechuanese had built the station, but

never the railway. Now the station did duty as club house, presiding over nine entirely make-shift greens. The town improvement society rented house and land from the Government, who placed a policeman at either end of the links to keep off the riff-raff while the white people played.

"All they do, though, is to collect a copper apiece from every person wishing to cross it. It is these policemen's special little *squeeze,*" said Maraquita with a smile, as she and Eben walked along one of the diagonal paths. As he surveyed the ragamuffin caddies, the goats wandering unconcernedly about, an ancient driving a flock of geese, the barber who had set up his bowl just off one of the tees and was solemnly shaving a customer, Eben was wondering what Eileen would think of it. Then he laughed. "If this doesn't show how different we and the Chinese are!"

"You won't be like this long," Maraquita said for answer.

Eben gave a start. "Like what, Quita?"

"Oh, standing off and surveying everything."

"Standing off and surveying everything. Not I. What cheek of you to think so." Eben spoke just as he used to, enjoying bullying her a little. Why couldn't he manage to take the masterful note with Eileen?

"Well, just the same, you are." Quita had made up her mind she was not going to give in to him. "But it won't be for long. The river changes every one."

"Now Quita," he said reproachfully, "you are talking the way my mother used to talk." Then with his old boyish grin: "What is it? A kind of riveritis I'm to get? Well, there's one person won't get it. That's Eileen. She's too spunky a kid." He spoke admiringly.

A little pang went through Quita at the mention of Eileen. But life had taught her resignation. Of course Eben was not for her. Once she had dreamed he might be. That was before all their trouble, when her father was a member of the firm. Fortunate Eileen, with fate throwing everything into her lap! A little sigh escaped Quita.

Eben came out of his abstraction where he had been with Eileen. He eyed Quita sharply. Life did not hold much for her. He felt ill at ease. "Guess I had better be getting back; Eileen banished me until six o'clock. It's nearly that now." He looked at his wrist-watch. "We are going to a party aboard *The Palos* to-night. Suppose we'll see you there."

Quita was silent. Now why had he said that, Eben wondered. He might have known she was not invited. He wanted to bite his tongue out.

They had reached the corner where in their childhood each turned off to his own home. "So long," said Eben. She turned and watched him making his way through the dense mass of wheelbarrows, water carriers, pedestrians, rickshas, chairs. An old beggar, dirt encrusting his brown skin, one leg huge and shiny with elephantiasis, plucked at her sleeve. Mechanically she freed herself, walking quickly away

toward the low dwelling filled with her brothers and sisters. Her father would be in from his run this afternoon; she wanted to be there to greet him. Poor father, she thought, and sighed again. Life seemed full of futilities and frustrations. She longed for the seclusion of the convent in Shanghai, her own little room with the sweet figure of the virgin in her sky-blue robe standing upon her dresser. Anyway, life had no power to hurt her further, she thought. It had done its worst.

IX

A THRILL and a dash about Ichang that winter. The huge freight rate (the six hundred miles through the gorges brought as much as a trans-Pacific run) tempted the big and little companies to put on as many steamers as they could. The big companies sold their little steamers to the little companies and bought bigger ones; the little companies mortgaged what boats they had in order to buy others, and took the gamble of paying for a steamer in one season or losing it on its first trip.

Like the rest, Captain Hawley was investing up to the hilt, even using that sacred fund, his wife's money, which he had put aside for her as soon as he got on his feet after the destruction of Boxer year, though he never told her he had done it. The year was, however, a good one, no more wrecks, no more trouble for him personally. Maybe it would

be a banner year. He had level-headed captains on four of his steamers, and Hoffman was engineer on the fifth and steadied the skipper who was inclined to be a daredevil. Have to get rid of him as soon as possible. That is where he could put his son when he got his captain's papers. As Plant said, it was caution, not nerve, that carried the ships through. Calmness, too, and stability of temperament. He hoped young Eben was going to make a good skipper. Devil of a row the boy had getting away from Eileen. But the boy knew how to take orders.

Sitting at the club late in the afternoon, old Eben would gaze in amazement at what sober men like Little and Plant and himself had set going. Tired from hours at the office, before his whisky and soda had had a chance to revive him, occasionally he would question this success. It seemed to be running away with them. Perhaps they had not conquered that old she-devil of a river, after all. She was up to some trick. She'd taught them her abandonment. A demon of daring dwelt within them. There was his son, working like a horse, determined on that command, but caught with the recklessness of them all.

But when a whisky and soda had done its reviving work, he saw that if they were a crazy bunch, they were a pretty fine bunch too. All those shipping men and heads of business concerns talking big. A splendid lot, too, the captains, sitting among them; never touched a drop of liquor, not they. Had to keep the keenest edge on all their faculties. But how they played poker—a hundred dollar limit. Many

of them lost as much as five hundred in an evening. Did not make much difference though, all on paper. Kept their "chits" for the year, and they claimed that averaging up they did not do so badly, except for some unfledged "griffin" in business who was unluckily transferred before the end of the season. Anyway, it speeded life up a bit.

X

POKER speeded life up a bit for Eileen, too. Her father-in-law disapprovingly watched her, the only woman at the poker table. He had to admit she played a good game, but he didn't like the idea. Nor that crowd she was running around with evenings. But he could not stop her. They had had one set-to about her coming in at all hours of the night. She had told him she'd find some other place to live if he didn't like it. What was to be done? She didn't seem to have any decent sense of her responsibility to the family. Perhaps he should not have sent Eben away so soon. But then he had to get his training, and a man couldn't expect to follow all his wife's whims.

XI

UP to the very moment of young Eben's departure Eileen had believed that ultimately he would surrender; all the other men in her life had done

so. So had young Eben before their marriage and afterward, until this question of his work had come up. When all her arguments, pleadings, and even threats had failed, she had tried her mother's way. On the last morning, she had flung herself on the bed and wept bitterly and without restraint. Eben had begged her not to cry, and between dry, hard sobs of his own said he could not bear it. Didn't she know he would do anything in his power to make her happy? But when his father called, he had loosened her tightly-clasped fingers from around his neck and left her sobbing. Even then she thought he would tell his father he wasn't going. For hours she had listened for his step on the stairs. She had never been so angry in her life as when she realized he had really gone.

The next day she thought of another way to get him back. She'd cajole her father-in-law. She rather liked him. His gruffness did not matter. Her own father was like that, too, but she had always been able to get what she wanted out of him in the end. "Now, baby," he'd say, "you can just stop teasing me. I *won't do it.*" But he always did.

She found it surprisingly easy to win her father-in-law when she set about it. Like most men, Eben had always secretly longed for a daughter of his own. When this beautiful girl began making over him, he found some long-dormant chord of his nature strangely stirred.

As soon as the girl thought she had taught the old dog his new tricks, she broached her question.

Couldn't Eben be brought back? Might he not be office manager instead of river captain? But at the first suggestion, the old man snapped to like a steel trap. Told her flatly not to meddle with men's business. They had had words, and she had asked him where he thought a woman came in.

"She don't," he had retorted, picking up his paper and going off to his office.

Thereafter Eileen became one of the dependables at the wild parties of a group of youngsters, most of them experimenting with the fascinating idea of being "east of Suez." "The gang" and the exciting afternoons at the poker table helped her to forget her husband's departure.

Likewise, she wanted to escape the cheerlessness of the house; silent, dark, with its closely curtained windows, its heavy blackwood furniture, deeply carved with dragons, and well-trained, soft-footed servants, making no noise as they walked to and fro over the thick pile of Chinese rugs. They seemed like acolytes to Margaret, the priestess tending the temple of her home. "The immaculate conception," Eileen called the house to herself when she was harrowed past all endurance by her mother-in-law's constant serving of her house and her demand that Eileen do the same. "For young Eben's sake," she would say.

Listening outside closed doors, Fu afterward, in the kitchen, reminded his staff that the character for discord was the picture of two women under one roof.

XII

AS the weeks wore on, Eileen grew more lonely and resentful. Margaret harped on her duty to young Eben; the captain paid no attention to her at all; even Fu showed in a hundred different ways that she was of no importance to the family. When she returned from parties, not even the number three house-boy was there to let her in. The lowliest coolie in the house sufficed for the task. She hated this man's world she had been brought into.

Depressed and moody she started home early from a party, calling curtly to her coolie who sat with a dozen others crowded into the gatehouse of the club. He was in no hurry to answer her summons —none of the servants of Hawley needed to be—and he wished to stay crouched by the brazier, gossiping with his mates. Eileen, waiting for him to get his lantern lighted, kicked angrily at the clods of mud. It was intolerable that she should be of no importance, she who had always before been able to make herself the center of interest.

Suddenly she heard a man running along the walk and a soft English voice with tenderness in it speaking just over her shoulder. "It's lonesome, isn't it, without its husband? Don't think about him. Makes you moldy. Why don't you take me on to look after you?" He laughed down at her, pulling her arm through his with a protecting pat.

"Ed Humphrey, did you leave the crowd just for me?" She lapped up his attention like a thirsty kitten.

They reached her gate. "A small kiss," he teased, and started to take it, but she slipped out of his grasp, secretly exultant. This handsome Britisher was the catch of Ichang. Going up to her room with delight in her own bravado, she stepped firmly on the creaky stairs, hoping her father-in-law would waken. If he scolded her about the hour she would tell him a thing or two.

It was Margaret, not Eben, who wakened. In the weeks following, neither the girl's braggadocio nor elation escaped her. Margaret began to hate her.

But Eileen no longer paid any attention to her mother-in-law. She even forgot her husband. All Humphrey's spare time he spent with her, and often she enticed him away from his office early.

XIII

IT was China New Year. The country had gone back to her own New Year, falling on a different date each year for sixty years, until the slow cycle of the moon and the planets was completed. A man's lifetime little more than one span of years of the boar, the dog, the cat, the rat. A month of feasting

and propitiation of evil spirits, when New China discarded the quick rhythms of the West which she was trying to learn, and settled back into the long rhythms of the moon and the planets. Sloughed off the individualism of the West, content to be lost in the family, swept along in the river of existence. Behind closed doors ancient China praying and rejoicing, forgetful of the future, worshipping the past, the ancestors!

Out on the river not a thing moved, not a sampan, not a junk, not a steamer. Up in the city the narrow lanes of the streets were deserted. The shutters of the shops, even those of the money-changers, were closed. On the doors of each house, no matter how mean, red paper squares, symbols of luck and prosperity, had been pasted, looking like the blood of the lamb spilled on the door posts by the ancient Hebrews to preserve the first-born son. So it was. Luck and prosperity meant evil averted from the son who, by next China New Year, might be worshipping his father to-day kneeling before the tablets of his father and his father's father. Forcing back countless evil spirits hovering in the air, the water, from the paths of the dead, from the paths of the living.

Liu, unmindful of shipping, bowed before his ancestral shrine, not omitting a single rite that might keep evil from the family—from Mo Mo now at Oxford, who would be back by next New Year. This was well. Liu was an old man now. Perhaps by

next year Mo Mo might be needed to bow before the tablets.

The heartthrob of the West was stilled. Ancient China had stretched out her hand, laying it upon the quick pulse of machinery. Restless, irritable, old Eben wandered about his quiet house.

From the river came no whistle of steamers, but from the hundreds of close-hooded junks rose the muffled note of drums and tom-toms, answering the tom-toms in the city. Rising, dying; now a lone tom-tom carrying the burden, driving back the evil spirits single-handed; then another, another, hundreds together, beating, beating, till the whole air throbbed. Monotonous as the sound was, and ugly too, it had yet a note of longing, of elemental passion, which snared the senses.

As the days wore on, filled with the rhythm of the drums, white Ichang underwent a subtle change. Eileen at first felt only irritation at the maddening beat, beat, day and night. Then, already excited by her growing intimacy with Humphrey, she felt the appeal of the tom-toms reaching her, coaxing, drawing her toward the brink of their own erotic frenzy, weakening her resistance to the passionate advances of her lover. She held back, struggling to keep her footing. She spent more hours at the poker table, demanded higher stakes, a tenser game. But by the third week she could no longer keep her attention on the cards. She took refuge in dancing, finding relief and torment in the legitimate nearness of Humphrey, danced till utter exhaustion claimed her.

XIV

SO the month drew to its end. The tom-toms beat in final culminating fury. At dawn they would cease.

The "gang" had met for their last New Year celebration, the crowning festivity, ending a month of riotous festivities. To-morrow the men would go back to work. With eager hands they took the champagne. It steadied but inflamed their nerves, played upon for thirty days by the drums. They put the horn on the gramophone that its voice might dominate the orchestration of the city's drums, excused the house-boys from duty, turned out the lights save a few faintly glowing Chinese lanterns, danced in the deep-shadowed verandas.

Eileen led Humphrey into a frantic swaying movement in time to the rhythm of the drums, until he pulled her out of the crowd into the garden. It was so dark that they could hardly distinguish the masses of shrubbery.

At first she did not realize that the path they were following led toward another house at the far end of the walk—the junior mess where Humphrey lived. She sank down on the step. "You're shivering," he whispered. "Let's go in. Every one is away."

"No, get me a coat, Humphrey."

"Come with me." Within was a shell of solitude and quiet surrounded by the delirium of sound out-

side. Eileen heard the knocking of her heart and grew limp with acquiescence as Humphrey's hungry lips closed on hers.

XV

HOME at last. Eileen crawled, shivering, into the big bed. Oh, why had Eben gone away? Why did he want to bother with this old river? If only he lay beside her now. "Oh, Eben, Eben." How had it happened? She guessed she had had too much champagne, but most of all it was those terrible tom-toms. And Eben was coming back in three weeks.

She lay curled up in the big bed, lonely, cold. Presently she got up and put on an old dressing-gown of her husband's. Not so cold, a little less lonely. Only one tom-tom now, the others stilled. Why did this one cry so? Why did a Chinese city cry out so in its sleep? The *wonks,* hundreds of them, pursuing one another, the violins, the tom-toms.

The drums ceased. China New Year was over, and her brief, passionate interlude with Humphrey. As gray morning came through her windows, nothing remained of it but the ashen embers of shame.

XVI

THE white residents of a Chinese city live in glass-houses. Over and over, yellow Ichang discussed the lives of the business people, missionaries, of-

ficials, the Hawleys—their strange customs, their spendthrift ways, their careless disregard of the family. The Tiger had only one son in his old age. Why had he not taken another wife? Insolent of him to tempt the evil spirits that way.

And now this wife of young Eben. Here, as spring and the Feast of Excited Insects drew near, when the ten thousand creatures of the universe were fecund, she should have been heavy with child, bowed with her duty to the family. Instead she defied the family. The Little Tiger should put her away.

Fu spat upon her shadow.

But the house of Hawley knew nothing of all this.

XVII

SPRING had come, the time of the Feast of Excited Insects, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Birthday of the Flowers. Beyond the city, the mountains and the low foothills with their thousands of grave-mounds had turned green. The river, a gleaming, golden stretch of water, came down swiftly, rising daily, fed by the cold snows of the Himalayas. Slack water over the sandbank created a harbor which was crowded full of sampans, junks, steamers, and the gunboats of other countries keeping watch over their nationals, their trade, their religion, lest the yellow people rise and slay them as they had done before. But on this spring day, no one was

thinking of slaughter. The gunboats were just a part of the maelstrom of boats; Chinese and white man alike absorbed in the eternal business of shipping.

Often, these warm spring days, old Eben, with a kind of langour of well-being, would leave his desk with its pile of papers, manifests, bills of lading, customs applications, to stand at the open window, letting the spring wind stir the crest of his white hair. Ha, that harbor! He gloated over the middle-river steamers, making their regular runs back and forth to Hankow with something of the precision of trains; and the upper-river steamers, which he thought of as mettlesome steeds, champing at their bits.

He gloated, too, over the clumsy barges with their piles of coal to feed the mighty engines of his steamers, and the flat-bottomed Chinese scows standing alongside unloading or loading steamers. He liked to watch the long lines of coolies, bales of cotton upon their shoulders, or a shining copper ingot hanging from a pole between two of them, walking slowly up the inclined planks to the cargo ports, their chants rising to him on the soft spring breeze. *"Eee-ya, eee-ya, eh-ho."*

Sometimes in the night he would hear the song very clear and distinct, no other noise in all the city save the barking of the *wonks*. He would turn and settle to sleep beside Margaret, in his mind the clear image of his steamers loading in the night so they could be off at daybreak, great electric globes with

huge reflectors lighting the bowels of the ships where the cargo was being stored.

To-day was a minor Chinese festival—the Birthday of the Flowers. But as it was not important enough to stop the shipping, old Eben did not know about it. He had just come in from watching the burning of a huge lot of opium, pidgin cargo taken off the steamers by the foreign Customs men. Thank goodness not much of the stuff had been found on his ships. Now as he stood at the window before settling down to his desk, he noticed on the dock below, Mr. Liu, attended by his six sons, all young boys, a new family raised since the cholera year. Liu was wearing his somber best, a dull olive-green silk. They took a sampan and rowed slowly out to the Hankow steamer, just dropping anchor in the harbor. He remembered how Liu's impassive face had lighted that morning as he had mentioned that Mo Mo was coming home to-day.

A small launch made its way out of the crowded harbor, her deck, even the little engine-house, bright with color. Hawley took up his glasses. Two figures he could distinguish, or thought he could, young Eben and Eileen. Off on a picnic he supposed. Yes, there were Fu and the other house-boys trailing through the compound with baskets covered with napkins, startlingly white in the sunlight. These youngsters, grumbled old Eben, always wanting a good time. But he really did not mind to-day. His son had worked hard that winter. A little play would not hurt

him. Next trip of *The Beautiful and Trustworthy* he was going to put him on as second officer. But Eileen—he was not pleased with Eileen. Well, the girl would have to fall in line. He'd have to speak to his son about her. Old Eben went back to his desk.

On the top of the pile of papers lay a bill. Liu must have put it there before he went out. He studied it, began jotting down figures on a slip of paper, repairs of this and that vessel. "Old she-devil of a river, she makes us pay," he muttered to himself. Another line of jottings—the names of all the steamers that had met with accidents that year: over half the ships of all the companies, and one steamer sunk. He'd had a little smaller average than any of the rest of the companies. And he hadn't lost a steamer. "Not bad. Not bad. A banner year." There ought to be repair docks here at Ichang. That would be the next step. This sending ships to Shanghai was an expensive business.

Old Eben sat figuring and dreaming.

The sun traveled toward the mountains. The launch party moved up the river.

Along the alley-like streets of the city, farmers and junkmen and trackers, representatives of their villages, returned from their spring pilgrimage to the temples high on the hills. Among them moved the chairs of merchants and officials—the temple offerings, incense and paper money, hanging from the chair-backs.

Careless of time, the peasants—the young in bright-blue garments, the aged in their red grave-

clothes worn for consecration on this, their last pilgrimage—loitered in the tea-houses, watching the throngs flowing under the jut of the roofs. They eyed the soldiers in gray uniforms, striding along by twos and threes, here and there commandeering a coolie to carry their equipment. Like the city folk, the peasants were concerned but little with this movement of troops. Emperors and governors came and went and all took tribute of them. That this was a new set of troops, belonging to a different warlord than the one who had been in command of the city at the time of last year's pilgrimage, meant little to them.

XVIII

WHEN Mr. Liu, with Mo Mo and the six small sons walking behind him, reached the black gate with the brass knocker, it was flung wide. Clasping his own two hands, bowing again and again, the gateman murmured, "Young Master, long life, happiness."

Through court after court, where every tree and shrub was decorated to-day with a red paper tag to commemorate the Birthday of the Flowers, the father and son passed to Mr. Liu's private room. Outside all was still, except for a faint trickle of water over the rockery.

Across the flagging a very old servant limped with a wash-basin of hot cloths. He paused in the door-

way murmuring, "Young Master, long life, happiness." Liu and Mo Mo took the steaming cloths, and wiped their faces. Then they sat silent. Mo Mo took another. How good the steaming cloth felt this dusty hot day. The comfort of the old custom, foregone for all the time he was in England.

Stopping to do obeisance at the threshold, another servant entered, murmuring, "Long life, happiness," and brought the water pipe. He lighted a paper spill, held it to the pipe. Mr. Liu puffed once, twice, then handed it to his son. Half closing his eyes in enjoyment, Mo Mo smoked.

Suddenly Mo Mo's gray flannels, made by the best English tailors and of which he had been so proud when he left England, felt hot and uncomfortable; ugly, too, by the side of his father's soft silks. A wave of nostalgia for the touch of silk came over him.

Another servant came with sweetmeats. "Long life, happiness." Father and son talked, with long quiet pauses for the pipe. At last Mr. Liu rose, and Mo Mo followed. Walking slowly from court to court they came to his mother's room.

All was just as Mo Mo remembered it: his mother's bed filling most of the room, the curtains fastened back, the silk quilts neatly piled at the back. She sat in a straight chair by the side of the square tea-table. On it stood her water pipe and a plate of sweetmeats. Her face was stiff with rice powder and paint, her two-inch-long finger-nails were encased in pointed silver sheaths; smooth as black lacquer was

her hair, beyond the high forehead of the married woman. How elegant and studied she appeared to Mo Mo after the rather frowzy women of the West.

"Surely it is time for your return, Mo Mo," said his mother. "Your marriage is overdue. It brings shame upon the house of Liu to keep your bethrothed waiting. But all is well now. The ceremonies are set for the next moon. A lucky day, the soothsayer says."

Mo Mo, on his long trip back from England, had been thinking he would break this bethrothal, made when he was two years old. But as he moved leisurely away toward his own quarters, he did not feel so certain that the way of the West in marriage was desirable. Later, if he wished, and she gave him no sons, he could put this girl away and choose one educated like himself in the West. But perhaps the old custom was best. Wives with Occidental ideas might prove annoying, usurp a man's power.

When an hour later he appeared for the feast given in his honor to the men of the household, he wore a pale-blue silk gown and gray silk trousers. His heavy leather shoes had been replaced by black satin ones, a little pointed at the ends, fitting his feet closely. As he passed across the court he saw the moon riding over it. A line from one of the old poets came to him.

He spat once, twice. Deep in thought, he pulled up his coat and loosened a little the woven belt holding up his silk trousers, then went on into his father's court. Standing by his father's table, piled with books

in wooden covers, he took from a green jade container a writing brush and in fine feathery characters wrote an ode to the moon.

As he laid down the brush his eye fell on some carefully written accounts. He looked them over. Not very interesting. Just a memorandum of opium coming down on one of old Eben Hawley's ships. The name Hoffman was scrawled across another slip. Details of the old life came back to him. He thought of young Eben Hawley, his old playmate. Now even in the eyes of the white world he was superior to Eben, he a graduate of Oxford, young Eben getting his education as apprentice on a ship. Still, he supposed Eben would try to lord it over him. Mo Mo went on with his poem.

XIX

THE "gang" were eating their picnic supper on the deck of the launch.

"Eileen," whispered young Eben, "let's get away from this. I want to show you something."

He helped her off the boat, and together in the pale moonlight they walked along the bank, leaving the laughter and talk of the picnickers behind. They followed the narrow footpaths. Young Eben guided her around the boulders. Like a lake hemmed in by lofty mountains, the river lay below them.

"Darling," young Eben said softly. Eileen for a moment nestled into his arms, then drew away with

the excuse that they must hurry if they were to keep ahead of the others.

Such a strange Eileen since his return. Although they had had no quarrels, there had been none of the old sweet abandonment in her love. Eileen now, even in her passion, was like ice. Young Eben's senses ached with a consuming thirst. In the past, even their quarrels, as he looked back upon it, were only a form of love, another way of feeling the sharp impact of the beloved personality when caresses cloyed.

They moved on. Suddenly on the left the mountains drew apart and The Great River, so deep that it was jet-black, undisturbed by a ripple, flowed majestically forth. Over the eastern cliff the moon rode, throwing its light upon the stupendous face of the opposite cliff. The vines trailed down and the fragile bloom of fruit trees growing out of its rock ledges at fantastic angles far up in the air looked to Eben like spirit trees with no roots. A solitary stream fell over the cliff, its foam and spray caught in the rays of the moonlight.

"Darling," young Eben said again. "Can't you like all this a little? It's born in me to love this country, you know."

She stood silent. Too awed to speak, she was at last understanding a little, he thought. "I won't be tricked by a moment of beauty," she was saying to herself.

She said out loud, "Eben, I want to go away . . . live in Shanghai. You won't miss me. I heard Father

say he is going to make you second officer on *The Beautiful and Trustworthy*. You won't be home much."

He did not speak.

"I . . . I've a right to be happy. I . . . want my own life. This old decayed country, I hate it. I can't stick it." Her voice broke on the last words.

"If that's what you want," he answered with an effort, "I'll fix it up so you'll have plenty. I'll make Father come across on the business. I want . . . you to be happy." He spoke with an effort, drugged, he thought, by the scent of the trees.

Eileen studied his profile. He did not look like his father. She sighed. If he had only been a little less like his mother, less resigned. She understood old Eben better. She longed for her husband to insist, put up a fight for her.

Eben could hear the laughter of the picnic party. "Where are you anyway?" they called out. "Not fair for you married people to go off lovering. Where are you?"

"Here," called Eben.

XX

OLD EBEN stayed late that night at the club. With all the young ones off on the picnic, it was quiet and the men could talk. Conversation turned to the campaign of Wu Pei Fu, the war-lord from

farther down the Yangtse Valley, who had recently come to Ichang with the idea of extending his power over Szechuan.

"I'll bet even with you he doesn't win over that Szechuan fellow," said a large Britisher standing at the bar. "He'd better be content with what territory he's got."

"Well, I wish some one would conquer 'em all," said an old man fretfully. "I'm sick of this continual fighting. Government by the people? Bah! Bleeding the people for their war chests, these military governors, every mother's son of them, as soon as they get a good fat bank account, they clear out."

"A great people. Why, a Western country would have been demoralized long before this. Got some strange recuperative powers, these Chinese," put in the British consul.

"Two things hold them together," a business man born in China spoke, "the patriarchal family and the town fathers. After all, they've always been the ones that held things together, not governors or emperors.

"These war-lords are a pretty canny lot. Always leave just enough money in a town so the merchants can recuperate. Sparing the goose that lays the golden egg, what?"

"Well, how about that bet of mine on Wu Pei Fu?" asked the first man.

"Nothing doing. He'll be out of the picture before the summer is over. Probably have the town

looted again, as it was last November," replied the Commissioner of Customs.

Old Eben got up from his chair on the veranda and walked slowly away without saying good night. Tired of their useless speculations. The thing to do was just to tend to your own affairs and rely on the treaties. War-lords could not break the treaties. Let the Chinese fight among themselves. It was none of the white man's business.

Under the electric light at the corner, he took out his watch. My, it was late. Nearly nine o'clock. He'd kept Margaret waiting an hour for dinner. He was always forgetting.

XXI

THE moon had nearly reached the mountains, and the streets of Ichang were only half-lighted by her rays. The picnic crowd had returned. The party at Mr. Liu's was over. The guests had gone. Mo Mo, a little fuddled with the warm native wine, slept heavily. The city slept also, close-harbored behind shutters. But not all the city. Soldiers were skulking about in the moonlight that was still bright enough to see by but not bright enough to make them stand out plainly. Stealthily they passed the rice shops. They reached the banks, the huge warehouses.

Lying awake by the side of his wife, young Eben heard a shot ring out. At uneven intervals another,

another. He raised himself on his elbow to listen. A night in his childhood came back to him. That same ragged firing.

"Eileen, Eileen," he cried, "wake up. There's looting in the city." There in the dark room, faintly illuminated by the last of the moon, he and Eileen fumbled for their clothes. "For God's sake, don't turn on a light," he whispered, though he could have shouted and no one outside would have heard him, so great was the noise coming up to them, cries and groans and rifle shots. The wall of their room across from the windows at that moment became as bright as if a search-light had been turned on it. *"Ai-yah!"* exclaimed young Eben, "they've set fire to something."

Over and over, like a refrain, Eileen was saying, "Who's doing it, who's doing it?"

"How do I know?" answered her husband, getting into his clothes. "Soldiers, but which side you can't tell. Maybe both." He heard his father coming along the hall, then a knock at the door. Not waiting for an answer, old Eben hurried in. He thrust a paper in his son's hand. "Take this," he commanded him. "It's my patrol. Those are the women I'm responsible for in case of trouble. Your mother has fainted. You'll have to go in my place. Get onto the side street and hurry. Better try and get them back here if you can. Our house can be protected by the gunboat if it gets anti-foreign."

In the light of fires from the city flaring on the walls of the room, Eben could see the list plainly,

the Hoffmans name at the top. Suddenly the face of Quita, olive skin, quiet eyes, docile mouth, leaped up before him. He had not thought of her for weeks. He felt the urgent need to get to her quickly, to take care of her, his old playmate. He threw on his coat. There was not a man in that house. Hoffman was up-river. He heard Eileen crying, "Oh, Eben, don't go." But he released her clinging arms from around his neck and hurried downstairs.

Fu, yellow as parchment, let him out the back gate. The looting was well under way now, the streets as light as day. There was no use trying to get into the shadow of a wall. Soldiers were hurrying along, their arms full of loot, driving coolies, and even women, ahead of them, carrying more loot. The best thing was to put on a bold front and join the crowd, Eben concluded. Evidently they were not after the white man to-night. They all appeared too busy to pay any attention to him. Guessed he'd try for the Big Street, the quickest route to the Hoffmans' house.

But as he turned the corner, right at his feet in a pool of blood lay the headless body of a man. He saw a soldier attacking a richly-dressed woman with a baby in her arms. The baby had on a little cap ornamented with tiny Buddhas, just like the cap which he himself had worn that night when his family had fled from Ichang. His mother had kept the cap. The woman had fallen on her knees before the soldier begging for mercy, pulling off her ear-rings to give him. "Oh, my God," groaned young Eben.

"The dirty devil's run his bayonet through the two of them. Pinning the little kid to its mother's heart." No, he could not go down that street.

He turned, and as he did so ran straight into one of the chaps from the customs. "Hey, Hawley, how'll I get through to those women in the Scotch Presbyterian compound?" he asked quite composedly.

"Not that way," Eben answered. "It's hell in there. Follow me. I know a side street."

A band of soldiers passed them, as they went, country louts these, laughing like children, hugging their booty.

"Turn to the right and down that street and you're there," Eben told his companion, "but give me a lift over this wall first. This is where I turn in."

"Right-o," his companion responded.

Eben stood on the man's shoulders and from there made the top of the Hoffman wall and dropped into the garden, calling, "Aunt Maraquita, Quita, it's Eben." Didn't want them to take a shot at him in the dark. He found them all huddled together in the dining-room. The servants had fled.

"Thank God, thank God, you've come," sobbed Mrs. Hoffman, falling on her knees and clasping him round the legs.

Quita said nothing.

"I've got to get to those women at the Baptist mission," Eben explained to Quita, gently releasing himself from Mrs. Hoffman's grasp. "I'll have to leave you for a little. Just sit tight until I get back

with them, then we'll try to make a break for our house."

"The two Miss Danes won't come. There's no use trying," Quita told him. "They won't leave the Chinese girls in their school. I know. They wouldn't last time."

"Well, they're on my list and I'll have to try. Can't I get across into their compound at the foot of the garden?"

"Yes," answered Quita faintly.

He found one of the two Misses Dane talking quietly to a group of half hysterical Chinese girls. "We shan't leave you," she was assuring them. "The soldiers can't get to you unless they kill my sister. I've told you that one of us will stand outside and guard the gate as long as either of us is alive." To Eben's pleadings that they come with him she only shook her head and went on talking soothingly to the huddled figures at her feet.

Then he went to the gate and tried to induce the sister to come in. "You're crazy to stand out here," he told her. "Don't you realize that you are risking your life? They'll kill you."

"I may be crazy," she answered him composedly, seemingly unaware that she was doing anything unusual, "but if I stand here, they'll know the place belongs to foreigners and there's a chance they won't search. You know what will happen if they find the girls," she added simply.

When he got back to the Hoffmans he decided they'd have to stay there. He could not take Aunt Maraquita and that brood of children out into the bloodthirsty rabble. The noise was deafening.

In spite of her terror, Mrs. Hoffman nodded off to sleep, and the younger children. He and Quita with the others sat on the floor of the dark room, under the window, their backs against the wall. Her hand was clasped in his. Only once she started when there was an unusually loud crash. It sounded as if a ton of iron had dropped upon the stones of the street.

The fires in the city died down. Just outside the gate they could hear some one moaning. Only once Eben spoke. "Eileen is going to Shanghai, Quita . . . to live." The girl did not answer, but she gave his hand a quick pressure.

At last, day came and found them all asleep in a huddled group. About six, when the street settled into an eerie quiet, Eben rose. "I guess it's all over. Nothing will happen now." Silently Quita let him out the front gate.

He went by way of the Baptist compound to see what had happened there during the night. With relief he saw Miss Dane still standing at her post. "The heroism and the foolishness of these missionary women!" he said to himself. He raised his hat and spoke gently, "There's no use of your standing here any longer. It's all over."

As he walked along the deserted streets, he saw

blackened, smoking ruins. The gold and silver shops had been plundered, and the money-changers. The offices of one of the British firms was completely gutted; its great safe lay in the street, burst wide open. That explained the crash they had heard. Not a good sign. The war-lords were getting bold enough to attack the foreigner in spite of his treaties. Dead bodies lay here and there. He walked on, wondering what had happened to Mr. Liu's family. He was afraid they were too rich to have escaped. He hurried on to get away from the sight of this distruction.

Later in the day when all was as usual in the house, and they had ascertained that Mr. Liu's house had not been touched, he stood at the window in his own room looking down over the city. Eileen came and stood beside him. "Eben, boy," she said softly, reaching up her hand and rumpling his hair, "let's start on our own down in Shanghai. Something dreadful is going to happen up here."

Young Eben had one moment's vision of them all bound to a wheel—his father, his mother, Eileen, himself, bound to the river. A premonition of disaster took hold of him. Then his ambition came back. He said lightly, "Eileen, girl, you are a rather luxury-loving kitten. How'd you get along if I gave up my job?"

"There's something in that." She turned away. Oh, well, there was evidently no use trying to move a Hawley.

XXII

WITHOUT waiting for young Eben to invite him to meet his wife, Mo Mo, the next afternoon, arrayed himself in his gray flannels, and went to call. When young Eben came in from the office he found him talking to his mother and Eileen, telling them of London, Oxford, and the fine houses where he had been entertained. Rather large talk, thought Eben, sitting silent, showing no interest in the conversation, brooding over the row he had just had with his father.

"Outrageous," had boomed the Old Tiger, leaning across his desk, fixing young Eben with his eyes. "What difference does it make that Eileen *wants* to live in Shanghai? Don't give in to her. She needs a firm hand. I've been intending to speak to you about all this hoity-toity running around of hers. It don't look good, this Humphrey fellow hanging about her."

"Stop," young Eben commanded, nearly choking with anger. "I allow no man, not even you, to discuss my wife."

After a moment's silence, a little less truculently his father had resumed the conversation. "Eileen will be all right after a little." Then he exploded again. "The idea, letting her squander all your money. I'll see to that. I won't give you a salary."

Young Eben had studied the thin line of his

father's mouth, the set of his jaw. Perhaps what people said about his father, about his hard masterfulness, was true. He'd never run up against that side of him before. Suddenly he felt his own mouth narrowing, his own jaw setting. If he could not be firm with Eileen, he could with his father. "It's one of two things, sir. Either you give me a good fat salary, large enough for Eileen to live as she wishes, or I go too."

Then had the old man's anger leaped out at him. Rising and towering over young Eben sitting on the other side of his desk, he had cried: "What did ye say, what did ye say? I'll not have ye defying me. No one says me nay in this office."

"Well, I have, sir," said young Eben quietly. "You have your choice."

With secret admiration in his heart, old Eben eyed him sharply. Guessed this son of his was really a chip off the old block. He'd been so soft with his wife, he had doubted it. Defied him, did he? Guessed with proper training he'd make a good river captain. He opened the right-hand drawer of his desk, took out a check-book, wrote a check and handed it to his son. Young Eben looked at it. It was for more than he was worth just now to his father.

As he watched Mo Mo, he was thinking he should have thanked his father, but he was too angry and too sore at heart because Eileen was going away. So he had taken the check and stalked out and upstairs where he had found Mo Mo talking with Eileen. Evidently she found him charming. She

seemed to have something to give every one but himself.

Mo Mo rose, affronted by young Eben's boorishness. He had known all along that Eben would not treat him properly. All these white people in his own country were insufferable. What were they here for anyway? He shook hands with Eben's wife. Fu taking away the tea had seen it. That was well. He would understand it was meant for an insult. Chinese did not shake hands even with men. It did not matter that none of the others were conscious of it. In China the recipient of an insult does not need to be conscious of it for the giver to have satisfaction. Stupid, though, of Eben not to notice. Mo Mo went away pleased.

XXIII

THE river! Who could forget it for a moment. For thousands of years the people that lived upon its banks had been bound to its cycles of flood and low water. What was man and his little triumphs?

The uncertain rise and fall of the springtime was over. The river was increasing steadily in volume each day, fed by the cold snows from the Himalayas. Day after day the rain fell until all the mountain streams were swollen, then in flood, pouring into the already high river, making a huge and uncharted way. In the narrow gorges the water rose

seventy-five, a hundred, a hundred and fifty feet, turning the river into a terrible sluice-way, burying rocks, destroying winter rapids.

On the river came, with a mighty rush, a swollen yellow monster climbing higher and higher up the cliff where Ichang was perched. It rose a foot in an hour, then two, then three, consuming the refuse heaps, the beggars' huts. Flecked with coffee-colored foam, climbing the steep steps of the Bund, sprawling over the Bund itself.

Against the compound wall of the Hawley house the water surged. Junks and sampans not daring to risk the swift current in the middle of the river, sailed cautiously along over the Bund itself, their brown sails like bats' wings, darkening Eben's office windows for a moment.

The river was in flood!

The angry waters surged through the streets of Ichang. The anguish of that night of looting was forgotten. Let the dead bury the dead. In their unrepaired houses, lying on boards close up against the rafters, the people waited patiently for the angry river dragon to be appeased. The officials offered it a ram and a bull and a boar. Old Eben, his son, and all the men of the foreign community worked like demons moving the cargo above the rising water, watched the steamers day and night to see that they did not drag their anchors and ride down upon one another.

From the deck of the down-river steamer, Eileen looked out upon Ichang, its warehouses, even the

house of Hawley made small and insignificant, standing knee-deep in the river. The steamer started. Eben, standing in a sampan balancing himself as it rocked and tilted its way through the gate of the compound, waved good-by.

The idea of Eben not taking her down to Shanghai! His father had said he could not spare him. She watched the river, gaining in volume as it descended to the plains, reaching out over the rice fields, the villages. To the right and to the left, only the yellow waters of the river flowing on down to the sea. How she hated the river! The idea of young Eben not taking her down!

XXIV

IT was two years before Eben got his command. They were hard years: second officer in the summer, up before dawn, racing up the river, racing down; in the winters, long slow trips by junk to study the river bed.

On the winter trips, with no one to talk to, he had too much time to think of Eileen, her tantalizing sweetness, her way of being just beyond his reach. Once she came back to Ichang for a few weeks. And between seasons he went to see her in Shanghai. This spring he had taken her to Manila when he went to get his captain's papers. For the rest, there were her letters, short notes mostly. And bills, plenty

of those. Trust Eileen to do it handsomely, he brooded savagely.

But now with his command, surely he could forget her. He'd get all the excitement he could out of it. He'd show those other captains a thing or two. At the club, old Eben overheard him planning to start before daylight the next morning. "We've got to beat Ingle," he was saying to Hoffman, now his engineer. "Twice he's got into Chungking ahead of us. He's getting insufferable, bragging on the speed of his old tub. We'll teach him a lesson."

"Plotting, are you?" from across the room called Captain Ingle, a gay little Irishman. "Your boat's a freight train. I'll bring my express down in twenty hours."

"Raise you one. Nineteen hours for mine," answered young Eben.

"You fool." His father had stepped between them. His words sounded soft as a cat purring, he was in such a white-hot whispering anger. "Don't you know yet this river is not to be played with? Ye'll not start before daylight, nor do any racing. Ye'll do the regular run or forfeit your ship."

XXV

FOR two years more the shipping grew like a rank mushroom. Nothing short of a hydra-headed catastrophe could harm the Hawley Shipping Com-

pany. The summer of '24 saw the flags of seven different companies floating in the harbor of Ichang: two of them American, three British, one Chinese, and one Japanese. Ah, it was a great sight, all those steamers coming and going. But still the gunboats of half a dozen countries watched over their nationals, although the Chinese at last wanted foreign trade. Perhaps it would not be long before it would be safe for the gunboats to go away. International good faith established. Yes, coming on, coming on. Why, even tourists were going up through those once impossible gorges. What a change from the days when Eben had looked out on a river bare of steamers.

Margaret was away in Shanghai this summer—the first time in twenty-three years that she had left her husband. Old Eben, lost without her, as if part of himself were missing, went little to the club. He sat alone every evening in his parlor above the office, lights off, his feet thrust into a pillow-case to keep off the mosquitoes, for he was not going to have those newfangled screens to shut the air out of the house. He had his pipe for company: smoking, tapping it out, filling, tamping it down, smoking again.

His thoughts dwelt on his boy. Developing into a splendid skipper. Proper son of a father who had medals from the Chinese Government attesting his care on the river. Never, since he had rebuked him, was he so anxious for a record run as not to slow down for a junk, never letting the wash of his

steamer swamp one midstream. Swear at them, yes. When a junk cut close across his bow, forcing him to swerve dangerously in a nasty bit of water, then Chinese cuss words burst from him in torrents. But the junkmen liked him, and so did his crew. They were proud of his ability to use their own mouth-filling oaths. He had no trouble keeping men on young Eben's ship, as he did on some of his other ships.

Hawley thought with pity of poor old Liu. His son was a source of bitter disappointment. Mo Mo refused to come into the business, and, despite the ancient traditions of reverence for age, Liu was unable to control him. The old Chinaman had broken down his usual reserve and talked to Eben about him. He was worried. Mo Mo spent his evenings plotting with other youths, girls as well as boys, against the president who now lived in the Forbidden City. Dangerous business if it was found out. Strike, tear down, destroy were their slogans. And they were beginning to raise the old cry against the white man. Liu ought to put his son to work. Then he'd be all right. Train him down as the captain had trained young Eben.

XXVI

IT was the hottest day of the hot Yangtse Valley summer. The Chinese in the back offices had slipped off their grass linen jackets and sat naked to

the waist, drinking interminably from the spouts of the tea-pots which stood on their desks. Manifests and bills of lading passed languidly through their hands. Outside the sun beat down upon the water, turning it into a shimmering mirror which reflected a dazzling heat upon old Eben's desk. He went to the window to catch the faint breeze which was springing up. Idly he watched for his son's ship, due that afternoon.

Down on the wharf an old man moved among the sacks thrown in piles upon the pontoon, sewing up those that were split. Glimmering in the sunlight, lay small mounds of rice that had fallen from the damaged bags. How much leakage there was, even though he hired a man to sweep the rice into piles for fresh sifting! Eben saw the sewing-man stoop down behind a screen of sacks, cut new holes, hurriedly sweep the rice inside the jacket which he wore even on this hot day. It must be lined with pockets. The old trick. He would have to speak to the comprador.

Then he heard the screeching siren of his son's ship. A figure moved out from the shade of the warehouse, a figure of almost incredible daintiness this hot afternoon. Quita, all in white, from the tips of her little shoes to the large hat she wore. Probably down to meet her father. Very dutiful, Quita.

The steamer dropped anchor, but where was young Eben? Usually he was off the minute the anchor was down. Oh, there he was, in his white uniform, standing at the rail. But what was that he

was superintending? Eben took his glasses from the desk to see more closely. Out of the engineer's cabin they were carrying an improvised stretcher. What had happened? As it was carefully lowered into the sampan Eben made out the rotund form of Hoffman lying upon it. He put down his glasses, hurried out. Passing Quita there in the shadow of the wall, he started. She must not see her father like this. Or had she seen? Her face raised to him was drained of color.

"Quita," he said hastily, "ask Fu to get my hat." She hesitated but turned as he added, "You know I'll get sunstroke without it."

He hurried on, regardless of the throbbing sunlight outside. He must warn Eben that Quita was there. His son leaped from the sampan and met him half-way up the stone steps.

"Father, where's Quita? I've got to get her out of this. Something terrible has happened."

"What's wrong?" he asked. And then before young Eben had answered he added: "I sent her back for my hat. It will keep her a moment."

"Here, take mine. The heat is terrible to-day. Hoffman's shot, but not dead. Get him home. I'll go tell Quita and we'll have to break it to Mrs. Hoffman."

But Quita was too quick for them. Before young Eben had reached the Bund she had met him. Quickly he led her away.

Hawley stood still, troubled, uncertain. Then he saw his old servant coming toward him, and they

went on together to the sampan. "Fu," he said, "keep the crowd back," for already the loafers and laborers from the water-front had gathered, watching the sampan in which Hoffman lay, a patch of shade over his face and breast where the ship's steward held a black umbrella over him. Hawley saw he could never get him down the stifling narrow street alive; he was all but gone now. So he had the men carry his old friend into his own house and lay him on his own bed in the chamber up there above the river. They shut out the bright light of the sun, reflected and intensified by the mirror of the river, but nothing could shut out the river's clamor.

There, at midnight, Hoffman died, amid the clatter of anchor chains, the chatter of the junk people, with his wife and Quita and all the younger children kneeling around him, frightened, shaken with sobs, with old Eben and young Eben standing at the foot of the bed.

Why had he been shot? Some version of the tale had already found its way into every house of white and yellow man over the city.

But Hoffman never once opened his eyes, nor spoke one word to refute the story.

XXVII

AT last everything was quiet. Quita had taken the children home. The priest from the Franciscan church across the river had gone. Only Mrs. Hoff-

man remained, kneeling by the bed in the fitful flare of the candles placed at the head and the feet of her husband. Down in his office, where Hoffman and he had started the company, Hawley sat, his head bowed in his hands.

"Eben," he said, "I've got to get to the bottom of this. What do you know about it?"

"I advise you, Father, not to try to get to the bottom of it. The less we know about it, the sooner we let it die, the better."

"What do you mean?" asked his father.

"I mean," said his son, "that the story is true as far as I know. Hoffman was mixed up in this opium business. You know, sir, it's big and powerful, this opium guild. There isn't a steamer that hasn't got most of its crew in their employ. I don't know how far it goes among the clerks in the offices, but pretty far. And they are after the white officers, too. Nobody knows where the thing ends. All I can say, sir, is this—what all river men know, it's a common saying—once a white man takes the smallest bribe, the guild consider he is one of them. Can't go back except at the cost of his life. Hoffman tried it. You see?"

"How'd it happen?" asked old Eben, walking up and down the office, his left foot beginning to drag. "Suppose I can ask that. Why'd they shoot him?"

"It's hard to tell you, Father. He's always been a mighty fine friend to us, but . . . he didn't play the game straight. Played both ends against the middle. It's a fine line a fellow's got to draw in this

shipping business. He's got to wink at a lot or else he wouldn't have a crew to go up with him. Too dangerous, this river. There have got to be extra inducements. You know, of course, that half your office staff sneak opium through. It doesn't pay you to see too much in the office, just as it doesn't pay us to see too much on the ships. Probably Hoffman began by using a little money he found left around in his cabin. Needed it bad enough, poor devil, after that long internment, big family, and everything. An engineer's salary isn't much. Then probably he got to dickering with them for higher prices, bigger bribes, to keep still. Later—it's been the underground talk for a long time—he'd squealed on the guild to the customs. Playing both ends against the middle, as I said. Well, after that last raid the customs men made on my ship, and found the stuff in the coal bunkers, things haven't looked too good for Hoffman. Men in the coal rooms have been sullen. Guild suspicious that Hoffman had given them away so as to get the reward the customs offer."

"Why didn't ye tell me before?" asked old Eben angrily. "Don't want that sort of thing going on on my ships."

"Tell on a pal and an old friend of yours, sir?" Young Eben eyed him, his blue eyes twin points of steel.

His father did not answer. "Well, how'd they come to shoot him?" he demanded.

"You see, sir, Hoffman had acted queer all the trip. We were sitting aft, having our supper, last

night. He kept talking about this opium business. Couldn't leave it alone. All the time he was eating he kept his eyes moving as if he were watching for something. He got on my nerves. All of a sudden he went yellow as a Chinaman. Seemed to see something. There was a shot from behind and he fell forward on the table. I swung round just in time to see some one in coolie clothes drop over the rail into a sampan. That was all. There was a good deal of confusion, and I don't know whether it was some one in the crew or some one paid by the guild, or some one belonging to the guild. Maybe every one in this office knows. I'm sure I don't."

"Not Liu," said his father. "Certainly not Liu."

Young Eben was silent.

"Pardon me for saying it, sir, but there's a lot going on around here that you don't see or won't. I don't know which. This pidgin cargo now. What's to be done about it? It's not only the opium. It's all sorts of things they want to get in duty free and save the freight. What are we coming to? Where is it going to end? And the country is getting different, getting out of hand. The military are back of this opium business, and that means there are going to be nasty times on the river. Perhaps it's the military that got poor old Hoffman. But my advice to you is to hush the thing up. You can't lay your finger on a thing, and you haven't got a good clean case with Hoffman doing as he did."

"Well, I'm not fur giving in to 'em. They've shot Hoffman, and some one ought to answer for it.

I've fought this here river fur three decades now, and I aim to win, military or no military."

XXVIII

WITH the haste of tropic funerals, Hoffman was buried at sun-up. The coffin went first, carried on poles by coolies, Hawley and his son and the two eldest sons of Hoffman walking beside it as chief mourners. Mrs. Hoffman and the children followed in rickshas: then all the little white community, aghast at this tragedy which had come into their midst in the high tide of their prosperity and security. From the cubicles of houses along the way looked out the enigmatic eyes of the Chinese.

XXIX

ON his son's next run, old Eben was on board, shaken out of his belief that he had the river on a leash. He was going to find out about this new menace. Nothing grand in it, like the old fight, but something mean and furtive.

The deep golden waters of the river, flowing as quietly as they ever flowed, would have looked simple to any but these men who knew. Captain Eben Hawley Senior noticed with satisfaction the alert eye of his son and his air of certainty. He remembered how the sweat had run down his own nose on

that first trip when he had not been sure of the position of the rocks. No guessing nowadays. Plant's "Handbook for the Guidance of Shipmasters on the Ichang-Chungking Section of the Yangtse River," a yellow-covered book put out by the maritime customs, lay inside on the green baize-covered table in the skipper's quarters. Old Eben's enthusiasm came back, his sense of security too.

A long blast from the whistle of a down-coming steamer just rounding the bend. They gave her right of way, that steamer shooting down through the gorges eight minutes to the four miles of the Wind Box Gorge. Just as Hoffman used to say, "like a bat out of hell." Ah, he held his head high. It was one of his own steamers. He waved.

"Eh, son, not quite so ticklish as when I began navigating these waters. We've done the trick."

Young Eben pointed to the black funnel of a steamer sticking up out of the water. "That's your answer, sir. You remember, only last spring."

"Pooh, pooh." Could not seem to cheer his son. Must be shaken by Hoffman's death. But he himself felt ten feet tall, proud of his steamers, proud of his son, that lengthened span of himself.

Suddenly into his mind came the words of Plant the last time he stood in his office. "Hawley, I'm convinced the rapids are getting worse." Well, even if he stood alone, he was not going to become obsessed with fear of the river. Since Plant had died, he was the veteran up here. He and Margaret the veterans. He hoped that they could go the way

Plant and his wife had gone. She had died a few hours after the captain—not wishing to live without him, he guessed. But death was a long way off from him. He had his success now to enjoy.

"Much pidgin cargo?" he asked his son.

"Enough."

On the return trip they dropped anchor in Wanshien for the unloading of some cargo. The city and a little village opposite which straggled along a stream flowing down to the river drowsed in the summer heat. Old Eben, sitting under the awning on the bridge, dozed until his son came aft with a slip of paper, saying: "Would you care to have *tiffin* on the British gunboat? Just had a chit asking us. The captain's launch is alongside."

Blinkingly, old Eben followed out into the glare. "Seems like the hottest day I've seen," he vouchsafed as he took his place on the rattan seat in the patch of shade under the awning. "I believe the summers get hotter on the Yangtse every year." He stopped—bad as the rest, talking about things growing worse. Not true though, and he straightened his shoulders.

On the deck of the *Gnat* they found the whole of the white town gathered, six in all. Among them, the Commissioner of Customs, the representative of an American oil company, and another American chap who was looking after the wood-oil business for a British company. Upton was his name. Most of the conversation centered around him.

"Did you make a pretty good arrangement?"

Beacons, the second officer of the *Gnat,* asked.

"Yes," replied Upton. "The junkmen seem satisfied and it's all right with us. It's a very amicable agreement: they are to carry our wood-oil during the junk season and we can ship it on the steamers during the summer when the junks don't operate."

"That's fair enough," said the Commissioner of Customs. What did not seem fair either to the shipping companies, or to the Chinese merchants, was that the junkmen should want the whole cargo held over for the winter junks. That was out of the question. They could not possibly move it all during the low-water season. The Chinese merchants would have at least a third of their wood-oil left on their hands, and the trade with America and the Continent would be spoiled.

"Glad to know an agreement has been reached. When did you hear about it?" asked old Eben, the alert shipping man the minute the subject had come up. "Nothing settled when I left Ichang."

"Just agreed upon to-day," replied Upton.

"Wish you luck," said old Eben. "Suppose you'll let us carry some of it for you?"

"Oh, yes," said Upton, "but I wish they'd hurry with *tiffin.* I want to load this afternoon. Can't get started too quick for me."

As soon as the long drawn-out meal was over, Upton excused himself.

"What's your hurry?" asked Rory O'Malley, the captain. "You've been waiting for a couple of months, why not wait another hour? What's the

idea in loading your wood-oil now? It's barely three o'clock. Hottest time of day."

"Got to go, skipper," Upton replied.

"Well, so long," said the commander, "if you won't be reasonable." Smiling, he added, "Of course I'd want to do the same."

"So long," said every one, raising their hands languidly from the arms of their chairs.

"Had much trouble over this business up here?" asked some one.

"Yes, a little," said O'Malley. "These junkmen have been pretty nasty sometimes, showed fight. Acted as if the steamers were taking away their business. As a matter of fact, they aren't though. Bringing it, so far as I can see." He went to the deck-rail to knock the ashes out of his pipe. Suddenly he seemed riveted to the spot, every muscle tense.

"What's the matter, skipper?" asked old Eben, but he did not get up. He felt too comfortable to stir himself for nothing. A little breeze had sprung up, and it was cool on the deck.

"Looked for a minute as if Upton were having some trouble. Seems to be nothing, though," answered O'Malley. But he seemed preoccupied as he continued to stare. "No, it isn't either."

"Beacons," he commanded, "pipe away landing party. Fifty rounds per man."

As the landing party put off, the little group of white men were on their feet, to a man, gathered at the rail, shading their eyes, trying to see Upton.

The shore swarmed with half-clad junkmen who had run down from their village, which a minute before had been sleeping quietly.

"What are they up to?" asked young Eben.

"Can't see Upton at all."

"Guess it's just some row among themselves, but Upton better stay out of it just the same."

"My God, they're hitting him. Oars and carrying poles."

Now they could see Upton, fighting furiously to fend off the junkmen.

"Beasts," cried Merriman, the tears running down his cheeks in his anger. "They've got him down. The launch can't get there in time. Why don't they shoot?" And he danced up and down in his fury.

"Shoot? Idiot. They might hit Upton. Don't take it so hard. They'll be on the shore in a moment."

"Steady, son," said old Eben, laying a hand on the young man's shoulder. "I've been through mobs and anti-foreign riots and a lot of other things in China. They'll only bang him up a bit."

The last words died on his lips, for even as he spoke, the crowd opened and hurled Upton's limp body into the river, hurled him far, as if with contempt. There was silence now in the waiting group on the little gunboat put there to protect life. They saw the launch swerve toward their comrade. It was too late. The water closed over him. Not giving up till all hope was gone, the launch worked back and forth.

The shore was again empty. The brown huts along the stream from which the crowd had come slumbered now, as before, in the heat. So quickly had it all happened that there were only a few minutes' difference in time on the face of the men's watches. Something sinister now about the little village and the river, smiling as before, but hiding the body of Upton.

XXX

HAWLEY envied his son, so busy with his duties. They raced down the gorges, smoke streaming behind, the long blast of the whistle warning at sudden turns. Gradually old Eben felt his mind clearing of tragedy. He began dreaming again, visioning a day when the river would see only steamers. That ribbon-like line high on the side of the cliff —path of the trackers, empty in this season—would then be forever abandoned. No longer would human beings swarm over it like animals. For hundreds of winters the gorges had rung with the cries of men swinging like monkeys on the cross-bars of towing ropes, muscles throbbing, backs quivering to the overseer's whip. Some day the junks would be gone. Two thousand horse-power engines would do the work.

"Where are we now, Eben?" The sun had dropped suddenly behind the hills. Darkness was coming down.

"Out of the Yellow Cat Gorge, heading for home," said his son.

"What's this stop? Not going to anchor here, are you?"

"No," replied young Eben. The engines were already pulsing again. "Little trick steamers have now. Keeps the crew contented."

Old Eben saw a couple of sampans drop aft in the dusk, making for a little village, a few gunny sacks in them. He said nothing aloud, but under his breath to himself: "Pidgin cargo, I'll be bound. Wonder what we are coming to." Still, not so bad, as he thought it over. Always from the first there had been difficulties; couldn't expect the two races to come together without a struggle. After all, they were getting on in friendliness. The East anxious to have the ways of the West. This son of Liu's, with his Western education; his own son, bred in China, understanding the Chinese better than he.

XXXI

MRS. HOFFMAN was going away. Starting over to see her, old Eben wished irritably that Margaret was there to go with him. This was a woman's job. What could he say to her? He found Maraquita sitting listlessly in her garden. Already here and there it showed a touch of unruliness eloquent of the change in Maraquita. A tomato vine had

broken loose from its bamboo pole and lay sprawled across the path. And the children were playing, unheeded, about the house. How she had belabored them in the past. Old Eben, sitting in a low rattan chair, his knees up under his chin, studied Maraquita. How old she suddenly looked. All her vitality gone, that vitality which had borne and raised ten children and made her rule her household so vigorously, arguing the cook out of every cent of extra *squeeze,* tending her garden with such a passion of energy. Even he liked Maraquita's garden. Glad, though, Margaret had not taken to gardening. He'd hate to have a lot of clutter in his compound. Liked it just the way it was—the earth all packed hard so that the outside coolie could sweep it with a broom.

"Umph." He sat up with a start. He wasn't getting along very well in this good-by business. He cleared his throat. "Why do you have such chairs?" he demanded. "Fold a man up like a jack-knife." He had always got such a kick out of Maraquita's spirited replies. He'd get one now. Lord knows he needed it to-day.

But Mrs. Hoffman had no answer, regarded him without interest. She made him uneasy. He rose to go.

Suppose anything should happen to Margaret. He was by far the older. Secretly hoped to go first. She could live without him better than he could live without her, he was sure. He was so strong now, but he was afraid he would fall to pieces without her.

These old marriages, all struggle. Two people got welded together. Guess that was it. There was Mrs. Plant, dying within twenty-four hours of her husband. Mrs. Plant, who had followed the intrepid Plant up and down those gorges while he explored them. And here was Hoffman's wife. Young Eben's life now was so different. That pretty wife of his down in Shanghai most of the time. Bad for the boy. Ever since the day of Hoffman's death, he had had an idea, too, that Eben was seeing too much of Quita.

Deep in his broodings, he almost ran into the subject of his thoughts coming in through the compound gate. "Well, Quita, Mother says you're all going to her people in Shanghai," he began, self-consciously, half believing she had heard his thoughts. "You'll like that, my girl. More of a place for young ones. Dancin' and things."

"Mother spoke for herself," she answered very quietly. "I'm staying here."

"What?" ejaculated old Eben. "Without your ma. You can't do that."

"Not here exactly. I mean in Ichang. I'm going to nurse in the Sisters' Hospital. I arranged it this afternoon."

"Well, now, what'd you want to do that for, Quita? Hospital's no place for a pretty young thing like you. An office would be better. How about mine?" Then he wished he had not offered. Stupid of him to forget, looking down on her, so pretty, that he intended his son to see less of her.

"No, thank you, captain," she said. "I want to

nurse. I'm like Mother, I guess. I've got to take care of something." She slipped past him into the house.

Making his way home through the narrow crowded streets, he avoided mechanically, from long practice, the babies who rolled there, the little boys playing with their diabolos, the ricksha-men, the beggars. He made up his mind he'd wire for Margaret and Eileen. It was high time ma got back, he said to himself. As for Eileen, there had been enough monkey business about her. She'd got to settle down and begin to be a wife to young Eben. As long as his son was such a fool about her, he'd have to take a hand himself. He'd have it out with the girl. Not leave it to young Eben as he had that other time. Eileen could wind that son of his around her finger. Yes, he'd wire her to come home, and then he would see she stayed there. And Margaret—he wanted to argue it out with her before he bought that little tug and lighter Windham & Windham were trying to get rid of. He would need them this winter if he decided to start steamers up beyond Chungking. Business had grown considerably during the summer. These had been banner years.

XXXII

THE day Margaret returned, life to Eben fell into its accustomed groove of security. Everything seemed all right again. Funny, too, for she was al-

ways warning him, always prophesying trouble. And yet, now that she was back, he lost that sense of disaster he had had ever since Hoffman's death. Seeing that American chap killed at Wanshien—that had upset him a lot, too. Somehow he could not forget the hollow thud of those blows—bamboo poles hitting a man's head and shoulders; the limp, flying, drill-clad body hurtling through the air. The bright waters closing over it . . . "Ugh." He shook himself.

But it was all right now. Everything seemed so safe with Margaret sitting opposite him at tea, and Eileen on his right. He propped his Shanghai paper against his cup and tried to read, but ma kept interrupting him. Drat her, why did she always want to pester a man when he was enjoying his paper?

"Eben, are you listening?" She wouldn't be satisfied with "Um" to-day. She'd got more spirited since she'd been away.

"Yes, I'm listenin', go on." Guessed the paper would have to wait.

"Strange, you know, Eben, somehow I didn't feel that way about the river when I started home this time."

"Feel what way?" It did not seem so important now that he was listening.

"Well, as if it had me, and as if a sponge had been passed over everything that had happened in Shanghai."

Before he could answer, she changed the subject,

running on about something else. She seemed to be wound up to-day.

"Eben, you would not know Shanghai now and the Chinese. You only see the ones up here, and you have no idea how they're changing down there."

"How do you know they're changing? You didn't go to tea with any of the big Chinese merchants or bankers, did ye?"

"Oh, those. I don't mean those, I mean the young folks."

"Oh," said old Eben, "don't I have enough of 'em in the office?"

"But you should see them at the hotels where they go to dance. I was there with Eileen, and a number of them came in, riding up in their cars. The boys were all dressed up in foreign clothes, and they were very—I don't know exactly what to call it—haughty, I guess, the way they looked around at the white people, as if they hated them. You know what I mean, don't you, Eileen? You explain to Father."

But Eileen said nothing.

"Um," said the captain again. "Nothin' very new in that." He was thinking Margaret and Eileen seemed to be hitting it off better than they used to.

"Yes, there was," said his wife. "There was something different about it. But it was the girls I was thinking about. You just wouldn't believe it. Up here, you know, the nice ones still stay close at home. And they look so kind of cow-like . . . But you should see them down there. They're so beauti-

ful, some of them, they'd take your breath away. And their costumes are so pretty, and they're so slender and . . . and just beautiful, I guess.

"But their mothers don't like it. They come and sit at the tables and watch their daughters dance our dances and you can just see they don't like it. Their faces are like masks, but you can feel how they hate it. Why, to them it's like making singsong girls out of their daughters. Strange, though, isn't it, that they don't stop it. Why, they're the rulers in those old families."

"*Were,* you mean." It was the first time Eileen had spoken.

Eben was a little bored and went out on the veranda to look for his son's ship. But it certainly was nice having Margaret back. Now she was here, he did not seem to need to ask her about the tug and lighter. The thing seemed to have decided itself while she had been talking about those fool Chinese girls down in Shanghai. He could afford to take the risk. Two thousand miles of The River Supreme still unconquered. It teased him constantly. He wanted to be at it. He stood there on the third story veranda of his house, smoking his pipe and looking up-river, when Eileen sauntered out.

"What's up, Eben Senior?" she asked. "I got your wire and now I'm here. What's the big idea?"

"You know as well as I do, my girl. There's been enough of this living apart. You've had your fling

and I've given you a grand one. Always been plenty of money, hasn't there? Well, playtime's over now. Get on the job is what I've got to say."

For a few moments Eileen surveyed her father-in-law, a gleam of laughter in the corner of her eye. "So it's the heavy parental hand, is it?"

"Well, you need it. What do you think marryin' a man means, anyway?"

"Not what you evidently think it does."

"Now look here. Don't try to argue with me. You know well enough what your duty is, and from now on I expect you to do it." His ire, accumulated through the years, mastered him. "The idea of a house of your own in Shanghai, idling round with a pack of other women who won't face the music and live in the interior with their men. No feeling of responsibility in you. If I was Eben, I'd teach you. I'd break your headstrong ways."

Eileen's carmine red lips curled in scorn. "I'm neither Eben's possession nor yours. I intend to live my own life. When you see fit to let Eben manage the office we'll talk about living in Ichang. Until then my permanent address is Shanghai. I only visit here. Is that understood?"

"No, it ain't. I'll—"

"Don't roar at me," Eileen cut in sharply. "You don't fool me. Talk about me being headstrong. How about you? What about *your* duties? Why didn't you ever let Mother go to America when Eben was there? Why don't you take her there now?

You know she wants to go. Why do you keep Eben on a salary instead of taking him into the firm? Why did you send him up-river my first winter before we'd even had a week to settle down? I'll tell you why. Strong-arm stuff. To you the power and the glory. It's not only Fu who says 'Master' around here. You've broken everybody in this house to your will —and a lot of others, too. But don't congratulate yourself you'll get away with it forever. Mother's right when she says the Chinese are changing. You won't always be boss. After all, you haven't really mastered the river. I hope it licks you. It's the only thing you've ever really loved. You've always put it even above your own wife."

Old Eben swung round, facing her squarely. "What do you know about it? How should you judge what love I bear my wife, you who've gone off and left Eben, doing for nobody but yourself? Wait and see if at Margaret's age you've made Eben feel toward you like I feel toward her. Wait till you know what you're talking about."

"Well, if I've done for nobody but myself, as you say, who's to blame? Wasn't it you who sent Eben away before I'd had even half a chance to get accustomed to things? I'd never seen China before. It seemed pretty awful. All of you were strangers. Things would be different except for you. And I don't forgive. I'm not soft like your wife."

They faced each other, flint and steel. Suddenly young Eben stepped out on the veranda. "Why, Eileen!" he exclaimed. "Where'd you drop from? I

heard some one talking, but I didn't dream of finding you here."

"I'm Father's little surprise party," she said sweetly, drawing him away into the house.

Part V

The River

I

THE night was pitch-black and rain drove in sheets across the empty Bund. One of the November squalls which come up suddenly along the Yangtse lashed the river. Muffled in a heavy coat, Captain Hawley moved out of the lea of the godown wall, his tall figure bent to the wind and rain. Following the feeble light carried by his sampan man, he descended the slippery steps and got into a sampan. Rocking, tipping, the little boat battled the choppy waves until they came alongside the *Iping,* anchored out in the deep channel. She was scheduled to sail at daybreak.

"Queer slant she's got. Drop down by her stern," he commanded.

Dexterously the man maneuvered his flat-bottomed craft along the hulk of the steamer until Eben could flash his electric torch on her draft marks. She was six inches below her proper load line.

"Humph! Just as I thought," he muttered. "A fine time for pidgin cargo! Just the night to catch the white man off his guard. But not this time, you sons of guns."

"Ahoy there!" He banged on the hull.

A lantern was thrust over the side. It seemed a

long time before the cargo door was swung open and he clambered on board. Wiping the streaming rain from his face, he went below to investigate. Down by the propeller shafts he came upon some five tons of pig-iron not declared on her manifests. What cheek! Pig-iron!

White with anger, he rounded up the crew and addressed them. "Now, my pretties, whoever got this stuff on had better get it off. What are you trying to do? Sink the blasted ship?" He raved, he swore. Childish performance. What'd they think? Captain would sail with a cargo like that? "Now, I'll give you until midnight to get this stuff off. I'm asking no questions. Only it's got to be off or I'll see it's thrown overboard."

There was a moody silence among them. Captain Hawley went into the skipper's room. The two of them sat there listening to voices raised now and then in argument. Men clambered back and forth over the sides of the ship. Hawley thought he detected the steward's voice, but he was not sure. Anyway, it did not pay to know too much. Above all things, he must not let whoever it was lose face. A man could keep his face even if he had to take his stuff off if Eben did not openly witness his defeat. By and by, sitting there in the captain's office, they heard the falling of heavy bars. Hawley looked at his skipper. For a time neither spoke.

"Have another drink, sir?" asked the skipper.

They sat another hour, listening to the jangle of the iron, the muffled talk. Then all was silent on

the ship. Along toward two in the morning Eben rang for the steward.

"All right now? Everything all right, steward?"

"All proper," answered the steward.

"There is one thing about it," said old Eben after the steward had gone. "Those fellows are pretty decent when you really have the goods on them. They know when they are beaten in fair battle. But I'll just sit here to see that none of that pig-iron comes back. Turn in, skipper. You've got to be up early."

His white head nodding now and then, Eben sat on in the empty saloon. Toward morning he went down through the ship. There was no trace of the iron bars. Going through the cargo door he stepped into his sampan, waiting alongside, and told them to row him astern. His pocket flash showed that the ship stood just even with the loading mark. Somehow he suspected there was still some of the iron aboard. Maybe they had crowded out some of the cargo declared on the manifests. But he thought it was better not to press his investigations further this time.

Wearily he climbed the steps of the Bund, sloshing along through the mud to his compound gate. The rain had ceased. The windows at the top of the house were lighted. He found Margaret waiting for him, asleep in her chair. "Oh, pshaw," he said to himself. "What am I worrying about? Gettin' as bad as those tame cats in Shanghai who wouldn't go into shipping up here and lost a fine chance."

But just as he was dropping off to sleep, he started up, wide-awake, seeing those iron bars clear as day lying along the keel of his ship. He arose and lighted his pipe.

"Eben, what *are* you doing?"asked Margaret.

"Oh, just having a quiet smoke."

"Well, it's a queer time. You're not worrying, are you, Eben?" Margaret sat up and regarded him somewhat critically. "Fu says—"

"Pshaw, now, Margaret. What have I got to worry about? And don't you go listening to Fu."

II

FOR several weeks afterward, without saying anything about it, Eben made a nightly inspection of his steamers, watching with growing alarm the rapid growth of pidgin cargo. When, years ago, it had started with opium he, like all the other shipping men, had ignored it, taking the stand that if it did not interfere with cargo it was none of his business. Then cigarettes had been smuggled through, but those were light stuff that did not bring the ship much lower in the water. Even last summer, after his talk with young Eben, he had chosen to ignore it. But suddenly with the opening of the winter shipping, the smugglers had grown bolder, smuggling bags of sugar and flour. And now that pig-iron. It meant the smugglers had reached the

point where they insolently defied the shipping men, did not care for treaties, the safety of the ships, or even human life.

And he had no redress except personal action. He had to face the fact that there was no longer any law in the Flowery Kingdom, just the whim of some war-lord, here to-day, gone to-morrow. All autumn this growing volume of pidgin cargo had been eating into his profits. If the returns were as big as last year, it wouldn't make much difference, but freight reduction had started in earnest this winter. Eben had to own to himself that he, with the rest of the shipping firms, had put more steamers on the river than the freight justified. This cutting of rates was what had come of it. He should have listened to Margaret for once, not put all that money into the tug and lighter. He needed every extra penny now to tide him over.

Week by week Eben had watched his profits disappear. He began staying late at the office, long after all the clerks had gone, figuring to see how he could meet all the demands made upon him. Besides spending extra hours at his desk he haunted the foreshore every night that one of his steamers was loading, trying to keep down the illegitimate cargo.

He worked single-handed. There was no one in his office whom he could trust to do this. That defection among the youths in his employ which young Eben had detected upon his return from America was very evident this winter, and he dared

not ask the skippers of his steamers to help him for fear of endangering their lives. Hoffman may not have played the game straight, but Hawley now knew that, straight or crooked, any piece of information that leaked out through a white officer might mean his end. Death was so easy up there in the gorges, so readily made to appear accidental. No, he could not ask his skippers to help him with pidgin cargo.

And boycotts. He grew more and more worried lest something should happen to bring down a boycott upon him. The Japanese had incurred the displeasure of the students, and these had induced the merchants to ship no cargo on Japanese steamers. Now Mo Mo's crowd had started an agitation against him. Poor fool, Mo Mo, as if his rice didn't depend upon the shippin'. My, he couldn't weather a boycott. Treacherous thing, success. Why three months ago he thought he had it tightly clasped in his hand, and now . . .

There were days when, burdened by his worries, he felt powerless to fight. With the intuition of primitive men, the smugglers knew when he was weak and pressed their advantage. Then would come times like the night he discovered the pig-iron when his anger would leap forth in the old vigor. Then for a time things would be better, and some other company would be the butt of their attack. But after a little, like wolves, they would begin closing in on him again.

The tenacious determination of that phantom

group of shippers wore all the white men down, put their nerves on a treacherous hair-trigger. Some broke altogether; one of the shipping companies actually made a contract with the smugglers to transport their opium. Skippers who had been on the river for years were known to be carrying it in their cabins for forty dollars a picul. "Trafficking with the devil," old Eben called it.

III

THE club became gayer than ever. There was a new camaraderie among the shipping men. All day there might be rivalry as they cut one another's throats, lowering the rates to get the freight. But at night they were bound together by the common menace. They played poker now with a two-hundred-dollar limit. The betting was heavy. They played with cards against their chests, a glass of whisky by every mother's son of them, except captains running ships through the rapids. Some of these had drinks brought them, and during the game often passed their glasses across their lips to get the fumes of the liquor. Old Eben did not join them at the card tables, but he came in every evening and sat for a while by the open fire, seemingly gaining some comfort from his silent participation in the heat and excitement.

One evening he came into the club as usual as the habituals were drinking the six o'clock whisky and soda. The accustomed surroundings gave old Eben

a sense of security. In the first glow from the spirits, he felt a renewed faith in the stability of the Chinese middle class. Unconsciously, in his restless activity, Eben had come to rely upon the silent contentment of the masses; to-day, sitting here, with the voices of the city drifting in to him, he felt himself consciously depending upon the ancient Chinese structure underneath all this top-work of war-lords and anti-foreign propaganda. For centuries, under all the turmoil of wars and rebellions, there had remained the solid mass of the people who loved industry and peace, too.

He heard the occasional voice of a bidder from the bridge tables. "A heart." "Two diamonds." "Double." A man named Esley, sitting next him near the open fire, chuckled to himself.

"What's up?" asked Eben, almost genial this evening.

"Saw a funny thing to-day. A Chinese girl down around your wharves lecturing to the coolies, telling them this anti-foreign stuff. Had a whole crowd around her. I stopped to listen. She was telling them the white man did lots of harm and wanted to take their country and that they must not have anything to do with him. They must not buy our things or work for us. There was an old-time coolie standing on the edge of the crowd, blue cotton pants rolled to the knees, patched short coat, carrying pole, and all. Suddenly he interrupted her. 'You have on foreign glasses, I have none. You have on leather shoes, I have none. You have a watch on your wrist, I have

none. You go to a foreign school. Why do you talk to me?' The whole crowd roared with delight; you know how they do when they see a joke. 'Yes, yes,' they said, 'why do you talk to us?' "

Captain Hawley looked highly amused. "Just what I'd been thinking. Trust John Chinaman. He's pretty shrewd; can't fool him much. Well, what did the girl do? Course she couldn't stand to be laughed at."

"No, she didn't like it. The crowd melted away and she did not make any effort to get it together again."

"Funny," murmured old Eben, "to see girls like that. They make me a lot of trouble on my wharves. It ain't the thing. Why, these girls used to be the modestest females. Their mothers must get a turn. Well, well. Have another whisky and soda?"

When the boy brought the drinks, a telegram for Captain Hawley lay on the tray beside the glasses.

IV

EBEN tore open the white envelope.

"Who's General Kuo? Actin' governor in Szechuan, ain't he, just now? He's taken young Bently captive."

Men gathered round him. "What's that, Hawley?" they asked. "Must be some mistake. Certainly they would not capture an American citizen in cold blood. It's against the treaties. If they did that—"

"Well, here it is in the telegram," said old Eben, and he tapped the white paper with his great forefinger. "Hear what it says. It's from the engineer. 'Near Chungking sampan cut across bow. Reversed engines. Too late. Sampan sunk. Reaching Chungking General Kuo came aboard with armed force. Tied Bently. Took him jail.' "

Jamming the telegram into his pocket, Eben Hawley reached for his hat and went out, slamming the door on the excited men. With great strides he made his way down the cluttered streets.

In the shops and stalls along the way, men wagged their heads, saying: "The Great Tiger limps to-night. He is angry. He goes licking his chops. The Great Tiger will fight to-night. Fine Old Tiger with a white mane."

At his office Eben handed Fu a half-dozen telegrams to be sent immediately. But even then, he could not rest. He paced up and down his office, back and forth. Margaret, hearing the halt in his step, came to see what was the matter. Eben gave her the telegram to read and then went back to his pacing.

"Well," said Margaret after she had read it, secretly a little relieved, fearing it was something about young Eben, "it might be worse. Nobody's killed or their ships wrecked, and . . . Eben's safe." Her heart betrayed her into these last words.

"Just like a woman, just because her child's safe," bellowed old Eben. "Worse? It couldn't be worse. Don't you see, Margaret? A precedent is everything

with a Chinese. With all the care in the world we can't help having accidents on the river, and if without trial they can cast us into their foul prisons we've got no chance. Why, they can ruin us, and all this anti-foreign talk has begun again. It's what they intend to do . . . ruin us." And there was a catch in old Eben's voice, despite the deep bass roar in which he had started out.

"Why Margaret, look at the indignity. Throwing one of my captains into prison. For years I've been known all up and down the river as considerate to junks. Orders to all my captains is 'slow down for junks and sampans even if it endangers the ship.'" Eben repeated the order with pride. "But this cursed business of trying to lose their string of devils. A captain can't help runnin' into 'em once in a while, and Bently's new at the job. They know it, and they know I play fair with 'em. It's the beginnin' of the end." He caught himself. Beginning of the end? What was he saying? He must be crazy to talk like that.

Then he began again. "Say, something's happenin' in China. Marched him off jest like a common criminal, his hands tied behind his back, as self-respectin' a chap as ever walked the deck of a ship."

"But the consul will get him out," urged Margaret. "You must not take it to heart so."

"Get him out. I guess yes, we'll get him out." Sparks leaped from the Old Tiger's eyes. Then he sank heavily into a chair. "But that won't undo it. Think of it. Marched through the street like a com-

mon felon. This river's bad enough without such antics. Soon we can't get any skippers worth calling skippers. A decent man ain't goin' to risk such indignities."

After a time Margaret slipped away. Eben only grew irritable when she tried to encourage him or when she proposed his coming up to dinner. Fu brought a tray down to him, but it stood untouched on his desk. When toward twelve o'clock Fu brought him a second telegram, he went up the stairs to the drawing-room with it unopened. Finding Margaret there as he expected, asleep in her big chair by the fire, he woke her and handed her the telegram. "You open it," he said.

"There, now," she spoke soothingly. "I knew there was no need for you to take on so. It's from the consul. Says they landed men from our gunboat and secured Bently's release." Margaret rose wearily. There were dark circles under her eyes. She was younger than old Eben by many years, yet of late she had felt fragile and old after one of these vigils. A little pain round her heart made the stairs seem very long and steep.

"Ah," she said to herself with a sigh, "security must be very beautiful."

V

TWO days later, from the office window old Eben watched Bently's ship drop anchor out on the gray stream that was the winter river. A gray sky

and a gray misty rain gave everything a disheartening look: the beggars drawing their rags about them, shivering in the cold; the bony dogs creeping under the lea of the godowns. Bently made his way up the slimy steps of the Bund and into the godown gate and thence out of sight into the hallway.

Old Eben met him at the door of his office and grasped his hand, pumping it up and down. "You gave us a bit of a fright, but it's all over now. They won't dare do it again." Presently he stopped talking. There was an awkward silence, broken only by the comprador coming in for the ship's papers.

Bently, looking at Captain Hawley, was shocked at the change that had taken place in him. Men grow old overnight at his age, he thought to himself. He had not believed it was going to be so hard to resign. Suppose I'm letting him down a bit right here in the middle of the season. . . . Then the shuddering memory of that night in the prison and he spoke.

"Captain Hawley, you can think me panicky or yellow or anything else you want, but I'm not going up that damn river once more." His voice cracked on the last words. "I couldn't ever face it again . . . that walk through the streets, hands tied behind my back. The soldiers, they spit on me," he finished, just above a whisper, taking out his handkerchief and wiping his face. "And the prison . . . My God! the filth, the terrible prisoners—a living death. I . . . I couldn't do it again." Then he straightened up, pulled himself together with an effort. "I've got a

wife and children, Hawley. I'm leaving. This won't do. And it's only the beginning of the end."

VI

OLD EBEN stayed long at his office that night, but not pacing up and down as he had the night of Bently's capture. He did not have to wait round to-night to see what would happen. He could work. Yes, by God, he could work over his books. If he laid up the *Iping,* he figured, it would take away a sixth of his profits, already barely big enough to meet his heavy expenses, and dismissing the crew might bring a boycott down upon him. Even to-morrow's delay would cost him a couple of thousand in demurrage. The *Iping* must be put back on the run by the next day.

But this late in the season where was he to find a trustworthy captain? He knew but one—himself. But how could he manage it? It meant asking his captains to take the risk of looking after the pidgin cargo on their ships. And Liu would have to come back into active service in the office. He could trust him up to a point. He himself would be in from his run one night out of five, and so would young Eben.

He called his son, who was upstairs with his mother, and told him his plan.

"Why, Father," young Eben expostulated, "surely there is some other way. You'd much better lay up the *Iping* for the winter than start out after all the

years you've been off the river. And the season. You've never made the winter run."

Old Eben looked at his son sharply. "I'm strong as an ox yet. I'll show you all a thing or two. You think I'm too old to stand the strain, is that it?"

Young Eben hesitated. "Yes, that's part of it," he finally said.

"Well, what's the rest?"

The boy sat looking at the floor.

"Out with it."

"Well, I'll tell you," his son at last blurted out. "It's no place for you, Father. I'm afraid you'll get into trouble. You don't know how to knuckle under and . . . the fact of the matter is all of us have to knuckle under now, even to the crew, to keep them. We have to be meek before the war-lords. We don't say anything about it, but sometimes we have to carry their troops for them. We've never told you. You couldn't do anything. Those Chinese ships playing the military that trick of placing themselves under foreign flags, has done for us. It's made the war-lords nasty."

"You mean to say you've done such things and never told me?" demanded his father. "I guess it's about time I went back on the river."

"Father, don't do it."

For answer old Eben pushed his private ledger across the desk to his son.

Young Eben turned its pages, seeing for the first time the records of the company. After a time he rose and walked over to the window, turning his

back on the grim white-haired man at the desk. "I won't oppose you any more, Father."

"Will you tell ma?" asked old Eben. "She'll understand if you tell her. She thinks I'm just pigheaded."

VII

BUT General Kuo was not through with the Old Tiger. He had released Bently that night because he had feared a little those smart American sailors who had come up to the prison for him. But in so doing he had lost face before his soldiers. He saw a way to have his revenge and increase the dwindling money in his coffers, money much needed to pay his soldiers and make them enthusiastic fighters. Soon after the *Iping* had dropped anchor, on old Eben's first trip up the river, he sent a soldier with a letter for Captain Hawley. In it he stated that Bently had run into three sampans loaded with troops and ammunition. For these he demanded payment.

At once Captain Hawley charged off up the hill to the consulate to fight the extortionate demand. As he looked out fixedly over the curtain of his sedan chair, his angry eyes saw nothing except the horrible total of the demands. Thirty thousand dollars. Ruin him. Wipe him off the river. He knew the thing by heart before he reached the offices of his Government. So the one sampan had already grown into three! Eben had dealt with Chinese officials before. Grew brazen when they thought you were

down. Eben kept mumbling to himself. Well, he'd show 'em. Three sampans! The liar! The chair-bearers nearly jumped out of their traces, thinking the great white-haired one was angrily telling them to hurry. *"Ha-ai, ha-ai,"* they cried, forcing their way through the crowd.

He entered the consulate and threw the offensive long envelope, with spidery characters going up and down it, on the desk. "Read this," he cried. "Look what the blackguards are trying to do to me. Of course I shan't pay it. Whatever's just, that I'll pay and not a cent more, and damn their hides."

"I don't know what can be done," answered Mr. Everett, the consul. "At first they said only one sampan, but now even the people in the street insist there were three."

"What's to be done? I know what's to be done," shouted old Eben. "Do as I've done before. I'll hunt out the families and pay them a just amount and not a cent more."

"But," said Mr. Everett, "General Kuo has been here already, and he threatens boycott of your steamers if the money is not paid."

"What?" exclaimed Hawley, sinking into a chair. "Boycott my steamers, will he? What's he got to say about it?"

"A good deal, I fear," said Mr. Everett. "He is pretty well boss in this province, anyway as far as this city goes, and what he says is law with the people, as long, I mean, as he holds the province. And when he goes, there will be another one just like him

springing up. We'll do what we can for you, Captain Hawley.

"It is only a question of time," went on Mr. Everett, "when all foreigners, whether like you, interested in trade, or in religion, will be swept from Szechuan and off the river. This is an exclusive people and a terrible river. Both are combining to drive us away. We are only at the beginning of a great upheaval of this people who, as race consciousness grows, draw their skirts farther and farther away from the white man.

"These people don't want us. They don't feel the need of our religion or our inventions. You know how they let machinery fall to pieces and then quite contentedly go back to their simple, old-fashioned ways. They are of a different genius. Too, you must have found out that they have a curious contradiction in their natures. They're passive, gentle, repudiating something aggressive that's in machines. And still they have in them a violent streak that makes them pick out the worst of our civilization—our instruments of warfare. The pity of it is that it's we with our firearms that are increasing the power of just such war-lords as General Kuo. I know you have no part in it yourself, but there's more than one white man interested in gun-running on this river.

"As I said, we are only at the beginning of a great upheaval of this people. Take my advice, Captain Hawley, and get out while you can."

Eben rose in his rage, towering over the man at the desk. "I tell ye I'll not go. I've seen riots and

bloodshed and massacres and wars and famines and plagues pass over this land. I've had men yelling at my gate 'kill, kill' and I've stuck it out. I've seen men and women and babies fall down dead in the streets. They've been at my gates vomiting their black vomit, writhin' and dyin' of cholera, and I've stuck it out. I've heard them looting in the city, heard the women cryin' and the men cursin' and the guns poppin'. I've stood with my wife and my baby waitin' for 'em to come and murder us. I've been wrecked on the river and lost everything. I've taken my first steamer, made out of a junk, through these rapids with the sweat rolling off me and the goose-flesh standing out, and I've been sniped at in the night from the shore, and I've stuck it. I'll tell ye right now me and my son are goin' to stick if hell lets loose a whole string of General Kuos. We're not cutthroats, we're traders. All countries have trade. Got to to live. Trade's decent. Trade's good. Trade's here to stay, I tell ye!" And like some splendid left-over Roman, the old Yankee strode from the room.

"I can't see," said the consul to himself, "what keeps them fighting like this. But I suppose it's the spirit which developed the commerce of the world. Well, I better stop philosophizing and see what can be done for Hawley," he concluded, and set about drafting a letter to General Kuo in which he stated that Americans were there only in the peaceful interests of trade and religion, legitimate interests which benefited the people of China as well as America, and his Government would back up these

interests. Thirty thousand dollars settlement, he said, was out of all reason. He could not listen to such a claim.

VIII

BUT despite old Eben's determination not to knuckle under, eventually he had to pay General Kuo twenty thousand dollars to avoid a boycott of his steamers. With grim and set lips Captain Hawley took his licking. "Dancin' to the jig of a bandit cutthroat," he said bitterly, writing his check and handing it across the desk to the consul.

Even this sum crippled him seriously. He was forced to retrench in every possible way both openly and privately. He lessened his office staff, reduced his son's salary to a minimum, sacrificed in every way except on his ships.

Young Eben wrote to Eileen, telling her of their reverses and saying he could not give her so much money as he had previously given her. Her answer arrived promptly. One evening as the young man came into the office, tired from his run on the river, he found a letter. "Don't bother about little Eileen," it began. For a moment his heart gave a leap. She was going to stand by him now he had his back against the wall.

Then his eyes caught other words farther down the page. His heart skipped a beat, but he schooled himself to go back and read carefully the two pages in which she explained to him that she would not

hamper him, that she had never considered marriage eternal, but lasting only as long as it was stimulating to both parties. The moment for them to separate had now come. She would go over to Paris and get her divorce. She assured him that there was no need for him to worry about her. She had met a very charming man who did not place his work above her, taking it in such absurdly serious fashion as he did. At the foot of the page she added, "He has no complex about rivers."

It was a brazen letter which she had written to cover her hurt pride, but young Eben saw only its cruelty. He stuffed the letter into his pocket and went up to his own room, where he stood before the meager fire in his grate, a hot flush dyeing his cheeks. After a long time, he dropped the crumpled note in among the coals. It charred quickly to white ash. "I'll be damned if I'll make a fight for her." From a wardrobe he took a couple of dresses she had left behind, wadded them up, and threw them in after the note, holding them there with his foot until the fire leaped up around them.

At dinner, his mother thought him very taciturn. She sighed. Her son was becoming as abstracted as her husband.

IX

THE house of Hawley took on a more lifeless air than it had had in the beginning. Margaret seldom left her chamber now. She felt very much

alone again with both her son and her husband away most of the time, feeling too ill to go out on the veranda to see their ships drop anchor.

Fu, into whose hands now fell the entire management of the house, brooded with an old man's despair over his country's distress. He dismissed the other house-boys. "Fallen upon bad times," he murmured to himself. Since the long-haired ones had been shorn of their dignity, the country had moved toward weakness and disorder: the examination halls gone; the soldiers, once the most despised of men, now powerful, demanding money of Master. It was better that they all appear poor before these wolves who prowled over the Flowery Kingdom. He would not own even to himself that Master could not afford the extra servants, and to *amah* and the cook he spoke in lofty tones, telling them that for a long time he had intended to dispense with these good-for-nothing new-style boys. But going up the long stairs to wait on Missie, when no one was near, he often groaned with rheumatic pains in his knees, and he found the belt irksome worn for the whole day.

Night after night, Margaret and Quita, who had taken upon herself the responsibility of keeping the older woman company when the men were away, sat, one on each side of the fireplace, a guarded watchfulness beneath their desultory conversation about town happenings. Although Margaret found comfort in the quiet presence of Quita, she held her gratitude in check for fear the girl might use it to win young Eben now Eileen had gone. Quita need

not think she could hide from her the fact that she loved him. But if only there had not been the one thing to make Quita undesirable in her eyes, how gladly she would have leaned upon her, welcomed her as daughter-in-law. Quita, sitting opposite in a low rocker, vigilantly guarded her speech, never mentioning young Eben lest she betray her secret and make Margaret her active enemy.

When Quita came down from old Missie's room, Fu dutifully accompanied her back across the city to the convent, preceding her by three paces, as befitting man to woman. Quita made no point of his duty as a servant to walk three paces behind. She accepted whatever status the tradition of the Orient might give her, thankful for his presence. She knew, as did Fu, that the dark alley-like streets which she and young Eben had walked through since childhood were becoming unsafe. Tales told in shadowy corners of huts made the mothers draw their children close around them, craving the blood of the foreigners who dwelt in their midst.

Often Quita glanced apprehensively over her shoulder. But there came a night when there was no place for fear in her heart, no thought for anything but her chance meeting with young Eben. That evening she had met him in the hall. He started to brush past her in the brusque way that had been growing on him since Eileen left him, but suddenly he stopped, seized her hand, and for an instant held it tightly, then leaped down the next flight two steps at a time. As she reached the top landing, something

made her look down over the banisters, and she saw him far below in the shadow at the foot of the stairs, looking up at her.

After that when Quita entered the house, a breath of happiness stirred it to life. When she left, it settled again into listlessness.

X

ANY war-lord, who chanced to be in power, extorted as much money as he could from the impoverished people, salting it away before some rival chieftain drove him out. No longer were these leaders clumsily-armed backwoods bandits, but soldiers, well-equipped to demand not only from the native, but from the white men, whatever pleased their fancy. And they fancied ships.

Outwardly, the steamer captains raged and talked of fight. Inwardly, they were afraid and started up the river, knowing that each trip might be their last, and that there was nothing to do about it, since the war-lords constantly fired on their ships if they refused to carry troops.

The light-draft foreign gunboats moved here and there, up and down the river, helping the captains where they could, lending them the moral force of their presence, arguing with the war-lords, telling them that the foreign powers, and thus the boats, must remain neutral. While the argument was going on, the troops of the Chinese general would sit

on the sunny decks, their firearms always in evidence; sometimes a day, two, or even three would be consumed thus, days of idleness which cut down the profits. The demurrage of those days ran into the thousands. But wherever the gunboats were, in the course of time the generals finally removed their troops.

Old Eben kept on his way, never taking on troops, no matter if soldiers did fire at the *Iping* for not stopping. He intended neither to carry troops nor lose time arguing about it. Five, six trips, easy, as things went nowadays, The Tiger congratulated himself.

The seventh trip; all going well. But only four tons of coal in the bunkers. Well, he could coal at the town beyond the upper end of this gorge. Have to hurry, must get on.

But when he had dropped anchor by the village, he found soldiers surrounding the coal, threatening to kill him unless he took them up-river. Object? No, even for him that day was passed. Neutral American ship? How could he keep it so at the point of guns, fuel low in his bunkers, and in all the stretch of water ahead not a single gunboat to offer help?

Soldiers aboard the *Iping,* seventy of them swarming over the little ship. The Old Tiger, meek now, his back against the wall, taking them up-river. On through the Wind Box Gorge. Towering cliffs. Winds whistling round them. Engines throbbing, forcing the ship, strained to her uttermost, up against the rush of the current, inch by inch. Five

miles of it. Out again, engines at half speed. Going nicely now. Young Eben's ship coming down-river, its siren screeching "out of the way for the down-river boat."

Give his son a signal of trouble? No, carry the troops and keep still about it. The border of the rich province of Szechuan reached. Memories: he and Archibald Little talking of world trade. At last the night's stopping place, and the soldiers tumbling off.

Peace? Freedom? Hell, no. Thousands of troops lined up along the banks. General Kuo and the hundred and fifty men of his bodyguard demanding to be taken on the next day's run. It would much overload the steamer. But object? Impossible, with thousands of troops lined up on the bank.

The soldiers marched on board, swarmed over the ship—the hundred and fifty of them. Eben watched them from the bridge. So that was General Kuo, ex-bandit, with his rat-like face, and his slender mountaineer's body. General Kuo, who had led Bently through the streets of Chungking with hands tied behind his back. Eben smiled bitterly as he surveyed General Kuo and his bodyguard with their latest model rifles, and the executioner with his long knife. He, too, was of the party.

All the next day the Chinese pilot with strained attention stood at the wheel, Eben beside him, both knowing that if they went aground, General Kuo in his anger would behead the pilot and maybe Eben. The general stood on the bridge, his finger on the

trigger of his pistol, often asking Captain Hawley if Americans were not all rich. . . . Without accident they made General Kuo's destination. The Old Tiger was free to go on his way. Safely he reached Chungking and could wire Margaret, waiting back there in the big house, "All is well."

XI

YOUNG EBEN'S ship was a half-hour, an hour late. Margaret sat in her big chair by the window, waiting. She felt too tired to face her dread, the dread that they might bring her son or her husband to her as Hoffman had come to Maraquita, the dread of a telegram saying other than "All's well."

Quita, climbing the long flight to Margaret's bedroom, received no answer to her knock. Quietly she opened the door, felt the soft, wet air coming in at the open window, and heard the river noises. But there was no other sound and nothing stirred. The big chair was faced away from the door, and when Quita came across the room she found Margaret, with her head turned as if listening, and her hands folded in her lap.

XII

OLD EBEN said in his heart that The River had taken her. She was its latest victim. And would it claim them all in the end? In secret, he ad-

mitted for the first time that the river might crush him, even him, before his struggle was won. Suddenly he knew that going back to active service at his age had told on his constitution, iron though it was.

It was spring now, and a winter of fighting pidgin cargo, of sleeping on his ship to get under way in the cold dawn, of close watching for new reefs built during the summer freshets, all had taken their toll. His limp, no longer an indication that the Old Tiger was roused, became habitual.

At night, when the ship had been brought to anchorage, he nervously paced the bridge, as if he could not relinquish his watch even when at anchor. His eyes ached with the strain of constant staring at the water. The rhythm of the day's struggle beat in his brain. The remorseless river. The demon that had smashed his boats, that had snatched Margaret away, that was reaching for him.

Sometimes old Eben wondered dumbly how, after all these years, Margaret had left him like that without a word. In the beginning, he spent all the time he could spare from the river, sitting in her chair, at her desk, moving restlessly about the house, in his eyes the look of a searcher. Something lonely, baffled, and a little angry. And then quite suddenly the look of the searcher left him. He spent his time either in his office or on his ship, sleeping there always. Only when Quita coaxed him, would he enter those silent rooms above the office.

XIII

QUITA seemed to have skipped those last two generations in her family, the Portuguese and German, and had taken straight from her Chinese great-grandmother a patient force. It made her bide her time until the man she loved should swerve toward her; it outweighed Eileen with her uncertain love, her fleeting desires. Gently and with self-effacement she had served Margaret. Waiting still, she now tended old Eben, gently looked after young Eben, too.

Nights, when the ships were due, she went about the Hawley house, making it comfortable for the two men, a quiet, demure little person. She would ring the bell for Fu, and, when he came, scold him just a little, although she was a trifle awed by the old man. "Fu, how many times must I tell you to leave Missie's chair so—by the hearth for old Master?" she would say, as sternly as she could.

But when she returned next time, the chairs would be against the wall, two and two, with a table between, in correct Chinese fashion, the fire banked, and the room cold. And Quita would sigh, whispering to herself, "A woman is needed here."

XIV

ON one of these evenings, young Eben and Quita sat in the office after dinner, sorting a pile of mail that must be seen to before his ship sailed at daybreak. Among his personal letters, he found one with a Paris stamp, addressed in Eileen's handwriting. Even as he tore open the envelope, it came over him in a flash how much Quita had come to mean to him. For a moment he paused, fearful of what that letter might hold.

He drew out the contents of the envelope: the credentials of their divorce, folded inside a blank sheet of paper. But not a word from Eileen herself. Enigmatic to the very end, letting him know he was free, but not sending a single line of farewell.

He handed the whole thing to the girl sitting opposite him.

"Quita," he said finally, "could you marry me? I've nothing but misfortune and danger to offer you. It isn't fair, I know. When I had prosperity and happiness I went back on you and married Eileen . . ."

"Yes," she answered, quite simply, "I understand. I don't think about it the way you do, Eben . . . that you want to marry me because you need me."

Eben knelt beside her chair, laying his head on her soft little breasts. She put her thin arms about him,

holding him close, murmuring to him as to a child. Eben finally settled to the floor at her feet, his head in her lap. "It's nice here, Quita . . . I'm sleepy. Funny to be sleepy just after I've proposed to you, isn't it?" Yes, it was nice there, his head in her lap, the room full of the dusk of evening; so peaceful there, after so many nights listening for pidgin cargo, listening to hear if his moorings were dislodged, listening for snipers on the shore. At last Quita woke him. "Dear," she said, "it's time to go down to your ship."

As they passed out, Fu brought them their hats. "Pretty soon Missie b'long my missie?" he asked, smiling at Quita.

"Humph," said young Eben, as he walked through the streets taking Quita home. "How'd the old blighter know? Anyway, he's been so long with us, he's learning how to smile." And Eben smiled too in the Street of Perpetual Happiness, where the moon threw the pattern of the roofs down on the stone flagging, casting half into dusky shadow, leaving half suffused in soft brilliance.

XV

WHEN he returned to his ship, there was, as usual, too much pidgin cargo aboard. Standing on the upper deck, young Eben watched bales and boxes go over the sides into sampans, only to find later in the evening that they had all come back again.

Quietly and mysteriously, sampans slipped in from one side and another, depositing their cargo. He knew their scheme; they planned to wear him down, the scheme that worked over and over with the white man. But in his new-found love, he felt strong enough to fight the devil himself.

In this mood, he went to see the commander of his country's gunboat. "Something has to be done or we'll have to stop running our boats. What will you do to help me?"

"Tell you what," said the navy man. "Say the word, and we'll make a lesson of them. We'll have a Boston tea-party. Tell them to take their stuff off, and warn them that if it comes back on again, you throw it overboard."

"Rather risky," said young Eben, "but—" he hesitated. "Well, we've got to do something. Might as well go out of business fighting as having the smugglers get the best of us." Suddenly a window in Eben's mind seemed to open upon the intuitive knowledge of the Chinese which he had had as a child. He knew the plan was good.

He returned to his own boat, called the steward and told him to see that the cargo went off. From the top deck, with a full moon drifting out of the clouds, he watched it go. But when the moon went under the clouds, he saw the sampans move in again and deposit their cargo on the lower deck. He waited another half hour to make certain they were through, then put in his window the light he and the commander had agreed upon.

"Steward," he snapped, when he reached the lower deck, "what did I tell you! This stuff is going off. No sampans this time. I told you that if it came on again, I'd have it thrown into the river." At that moment there sprang upon the deck a dozen stalwart bluejackets. "Show us the stuff, skipper. We'll heave her over," they shouted.

The river echoed to the splash of the cases of cigarettes, the bags of sugar, the bales of piece-goods striking the water. Sampans drew in. "Give 'em the water cure," called some one, and from all directions came water squirting from hoses. A howl went up from the drenched coolies in the sampans as time and time again they tried to draw in after the floating stuff.

Eben felt the spirit of the crowd hanging in the balance. Had he miscalculated? Then the coolies, scrambling around like rats in their boats, laughed and pulled back. The victory was to young Eben. When the red chalk cliffs were lighted with the dawn, he sailed, without pidgin cargo.

Walking the bridge, young Eben saw himself through the eyes of Quita, a conqueror. Now that he had Quita, he'd win out in this shipping business.

XVI

QUITA'S church would not marry them. But Quita brushed aside the shadowy presence of Eileen who, the priest told her, must forever hold her

from her lover, and made arrangements to go to Chungking for a civil service. Young Eben warned her that the journey would be dangerous, but the girl paid no attention. All the way up the river she sat just behind him on the bridge, hour after hour without movement, now that there was no need for action, as frugal of unnecessary expenditure of energy as her Chinese great-grandmother would have been; silent, though this was her first trip through the gorges. He turned often to look at her, dressed with the Chinese woman's mouse-like use of color; her black eyes, with the little fold at the corner of the lids, which he now had the courage to love, gazing upon the spectacle of beauty and grandeur that was the upper river.

XVII

FU LING TING was making ready the house against the new missie's return. Now that the young master had done according to the decree of heaven and put away his first missie who served him not and gave him no sons and taken to wife the daughter of a woman who had brought many men into the world, things were beginning to be as they should again. He must see to it that the outset of their new life should be auspicious.

"*Hsiao Heitzu,* small child, before the light passes from the kitchen wall, the fire-eating boat of the

young master will be here. Follow me and I will teach you the perfect way of these barbarians. I ascend the stairs, you behind me."

They reached the drawing-room. "This is the guest-hall, where tea must be served. Small child, enter and prepare the way for Fu Ling Ting. Clad in your white gown you take the tea-table and place it thus before the long bench where they will sit side by side. Careful not to touch the toes of the great ones. See, now, you pass from the room like this, walking erect. You return and place this white square of cloth over the table. Again depart, walking erect, and with slow tread. And now I enter, holding aloft on the palm of my hand the tray with the tea-bowls.

"Outside the door quickly take off your coat in readiness lest Missie will look around the room and say: 'Fu Ling, a little fire. The evening is chilly.' I, Fu Ling Ting, will pass to this little button on the wall and outside you will hear two tinkles. It is for the coolie. You enter as coolie in your short under-coat, and take the command of Fu Ling Ting. Return, bearing coal, kneeling at that little hole in the wall, and place it so upon the fire.

"Thus are their faces saved; plenty servants to serve a new missie—Fu Ling Ting and a good-for-nothing second-boy and a coolie.

"Listen, I hear the snorting of the fire-eating boat. Follow. Here at the entrance, stand at the left of Fu Ling Ting thus, and *amah* upon the other side, that they may pass between two rows of servants."

As Fu opened the door, young Eben, happy-faced,

towering above his little bride, ushered her within.

"Long life, happiness, Master. Long life, happiness, Missie," murmured Fu.

"May you have a hundred sons," *amah* gave her blessing boldly.

"Long life, happiness, Master, Missie," murmured the *hsiao heitzu*.

Together Eben and Quita went up the stairs to the top of the house.

XVIII

THE spring freshets came in mighty rushes and as quickly drained away. The steamers, hurrying up the river at the top of a freshet, were often caught unawares by the rapidly falling water. Never had there been so many accidents. Every firm had its losses the spring following young Eben's marriage, except the house of Hawley. The Hawleys, it seemed, bore some charmed life.

Old Eben still sailed with the younger men, the yellow light in his eyes once more, drawing on some second wind of the runner, determined not to give in. Ah, he was the last of the old guard. He was a die-hard; he'd fight till he dropped. He felt he must keep up with those brave British captains—braver than he, for they had no personal fortune at stake, only a monthly pay-check. But they knew what this Yangtse trade meant to their country. Unemotional

men, they made ready their pistols, sandbagged their decks, going through with the day's work coolly, with patience and gallantry, doing their bit.

Casualties occurred, shortening the line of battle, but still they went on. A steamer sunk—one less whistle to listen for rounding a bend; a hole ripped in a ship's bottom—more cargo for those who were left.

It was late in July, and old Eben bound up-river. The sun was going down behind the high cliffs, affording a little respite from the terrific heat; there were no troops aboard; and the steamer had about her the languorous bustle of a ship about to anchor.

He lifted his face to the cliff, gaining a moment of peace. After all, they weren't getting through the summer so badly. They'd weather the storm. If things kept on like this, there'd be a tiny but sound business left for young Eben when he went. Missed Margaret too much to go on. Must hold on a little longer, though, until young Eben's son was born.

The sailors swung their leads and sang out the depth. Deep, deep, the water black in the failing light. Suddenly a rasping sound, a concealed rock. They were aground, a hole scraped in their bottom. Third in his life's accidents, but not bad, not bad, thank God, not bad this time. His diminished business could not stand a real wreck.

Upon investigation, Eben found it would take two days to seal the hole with cement so the ship could proceed. All night he labored, helping the crew, making ready for work in the morning. His body felt

tired and old and heavy. The ghostly stillness of four o'clock came. Must keep the pumps going so the water would not flood the boilers. But the Chinese engineer could do this.

He wished for a moment for Hoffman. Never done wishing for Hoffman. They had sailed so many trips together when the company was getting started. He sighed, thinking how many had gone. Alone he was now. All the old crowd with their romantic dreams of the river bringing them the golden fleece —gone.

In the ghostly cañon, he thought he heard Hoffman speaking. "I vill look after de engines mine-zelf." Trick of his fancy. Too tired. He shook himself free of such thoughts. The Chinese engineer was all right, quite as fine as Hoffman. It was narrow-minded, never relying on any but white men. He gave his orders to the engineer, such a capable little chap, then stretched himself, still dressed, on his couch to be ready for any emergency. Soon he slept heavily, the night's happenings standing far off, phantom things like his other accidents. In the paralysis of sleep, his great limbs would not move. In a nightmare, the accidents grew nearer, annihilated him.

Down in the engine-room, the Chinese engineer, now that his master slept, slept too, dropping down, as Chinese do, on a narrow bench. Who would know whether he or another did the work?

"Keep at the pumps," he told the two sailors. And now that no one watched them, the sailors pumped more slowly and more slowly. The master will not

know. For a moment let us sleep. Sleep was so good, and the engineer was sleeping.

Up around the boilers slowly rose the water, covered with a treacherous film of oil from a leaking pipe. Suddenly an explosion rent the steamer, snatched Eben out of the nightmare of his dreams. He struggled up. His tired brain took up the burden. Back on his patrol! Back to the engine-room! Chinese were not to be trusted in an emergency.

Outside his doorway, frightened yellow faces. With his great hands, he pushed them away and got on deck. Smoke was rising from the engine-room, a tongue of flame licked out.

"Get the extinguishers," bellowed old Eben, grasping one himself as if it were a mere toy. He ran down the deck in his stocking feet. "Oh, God," he prayed to Margaret's God, "not too late." He'd answer through Margaret. Margaret was always his go-between. "The pumps, work 'em, at 'em, I say."

He ran here and there trying to be everywhere at once, commanding, cursing. Under the water from the hose and the gushing sprays from the extinguishers the fires died, only to rise again in a great towering burst of flame and showering sparks. The boat's cargo was oil! In the bright light old Eben saw it flowing out over the water, coating it with a slimy surface, the sparks falling down toward it. The crew had seen. They knew they would be caught if that oil on the water took fire. They were crowding the ship's sampan, getting off before they were trapped. As for him, he would die with the ship.

No! thundered in his brain. There was young Eben. Into the sampan!

From the shore, standing among the chattering natives, he watched this, his last command. The flames leaped higher. A great explosion resounded through the gorges. She was going out grand. He laughed recklessly, the Old Tiger. Doors fell in, the brass railings melted and fell away. Plenty of fuel there. Going out grand. The heat scorched his face. What cared he? She was going out grand.

There young Eben, steaming down-river that afternoon, found him, his the first steamer to come upon the disaster. Skirting the edge of the channel to escape the intolerable heat, he anchored a mile down-river, then ran back along the little beaches, clambering over the rocks, following the towing paths to his father.

But the old captain waved him away. "Reckon I'll watch her to the end." He sat on a rock, hatless, his fierce eyes bright as a fanatic's, now and then running his fingers through the white crest of his hair, brushing it back from his forehead as if it clouded his vision.

All through the night he sat there, still as a shadow. In the morning young Eben brought canvas from his own steamer and made a tent over him against the sun and the rain. He would not eat, but he drank great drafts of the water his son gave him. Reluctantly young Eben left him, but sent Fu Ling back by the first boat from Ichang to take his place as body-guard.

Day after day for three days the captain sat in the tent's doorway, staring straight ahead. The towering flames grew lower and lower and at last died away. Then, a bowed old man, he yielded to Fu's importunate pleadings to go home.

XIX

THE pattern of democracy blurred and distorted into militarism; the new pattern of nationalism stamped with militarism. North against south, south against north, province against province, general against general. Bandits, trained in bloodshed and torture, turning soldiers; boys, too young to fight, going over the battle-fields, stabbing the wounded, growing callous to suffering and killing.

Smiling and beautiful lay the September countryside, the last bulwark of the nation, the farmers harvesting the yellow heads of rice. Through the gorges the little flotilla of steamers still moved, preyed upon by bands of soldiers, this faction, that faction.

The firm of Hawley had gone—the first big crash on the river. Young Eben had settled their debts, giving their last boat in payment, taking the post of second office on the *Himalaya,* a British merchantman.

In his own chamber, old Eben sat, morose, silent, asking no questions.

Only Fu Ling and the *amah* moved about in the depths of the house in a mysterious life of their own. Fu, a little shriveled old man with a pointed white beard ending on his chest in a few straggling hairs, his cheeks like wrinkled parchment, a rich man, now. He could afford the big house and the wives and the concubines, only he could not leave Master. And, too, the country had fallen on evil times. Better remain Master's servant. If he had a big house, the military would oppress him, and there was new and very bad talk. Bottomside, topside; topside, bottomside. Disgrace to be rich. Strange talk; not good talk.

There was Mr. Liu, so fearful, trying to sell his property and go away. But where would he go? All same down-river. Ah, very bad, but *"Mei yu fatsu, mei yu fatsu,"* murmured Fu, making the soup, *"Ai-yah!"* He had had to let the cook go. "Too heavy, this work, for an old man. And the stairs. *Ai-yah!"*

Old Eben paid no attention to his son's comings and goings. Quita waited, dreading the moment when he would demand to know why his son stepped from the *Himalaya,* a British merchantman. Then she would have to tell him that the firm of Hawley was bankrupt, that the American flag was gone from the upper river, that his son was second officer on one of Lynn & Lynn's boats.

The hands of the clock in the Hawley drawing-room pointed to three o'clock. A pale tropic sun generated a moist almost unbearable heat out of the vapor hanging over the river. It was time for

young Eben's steamer to make harbor. An hour, two hours passed, old Eben shuffled in his carpet slippers to the window, where all the Hawley family at one time or another had looked out to see the steamers come in.

The day drew to its close and still no sight of Eben's ship, no welcoming blast of its whistle from far up the river. Old Eben went out on the fourth story veranda, where Margaret had so often waited for him.

"He's been delayed, Father," said Quita. "Come and eat your supper."

But he would not be coaxed. The veins stood out in blue ridges on his face as he leaned on the rail, looking down with moody eyes on the river. "She went out grand, as a ship should," he mumbled to himself.

Quita watched him, little beads of perspiration on her upper lip. If only she could get to the telephone, without his knowing it. How had Margaret managed him, she wondered?

At last old Eben went back to Margaret's chair and, exhausted, dozed. She slipped away to the floor below, ringing for Fu, commanding him to get the office of the British company.

"Whei, whei!" shouted Fu into the instrument.

Quita stood twisting her handkerchief into a string. "Oh, Fu," she pleaded, "not so loud. Old Master is asleep."

"No can help, Missie," said Fu. "Damn fool Chinaman no listen suppose no shout. *I bai san, i*

bai san, one hundred and three, one hundred and three. *Whei! Whei!* You sons of turtles, answer!" At last a satisfied grunt, and he handed the receiver to Quita, whispering, "Have got, Missie."

"Yes, Mrs. Hawley," spoke a correct English voice at the other end of the phone. "Sorry I haven't had time to call you before. No, he won't be in tonight. A little trouble. Yes, soldiers. Yes, at Wanshien. It's the boldest thing a war-lord has done. General Yang has captured the *Himalaya.* Imprisoned the officers on the ship. Oh, yes, I'm quite certain everything will be all right. Our gunboat's there. *Cockchafer,* you know. Are you all right, Mrs. Hawley? How is your father? Tell him his son is lending us a little assistance at Wanshien. That'll please him."

They could not keep it from him long. As the evening wore on, he emerged slowly from the indifference of the past weeks. The engines of energy, run down by those unbroken days of watching, seemed again to be gathering momentum. At first he sat thinking, occasionally brushing the white crest of his hair from his forehead. At last he glanced at his daughter-in-law in his old piercing way. "Quita, tell me what's happened. I know he's on a British ship. Fu told me. It's why he isn't in I want to know."

It was a command. She dared not disobey, but when she tried to tell him what kept Eben from coming home, she broke down and buried her head on

his knee. Eben, Eben, who had been hers such a short time, imprisoned. Perhaps they would kill him and he'd never see his own child.

His hand rested heavily on her head. Young Eben prisoner! Worse than anything yet. Worse than the capture of Bently. Worse than the compensation sum he had had to pay General Kuo. Hadn't he told Margaret that it was the beginning of the end? Piracy on the Yangtse! Worse than any one had foreseen. The sons and husbands of the colony of Ichang imprisoned on their own ships, possibly put to death on the whim of an upper-river war-lord.

Intolerable! At Wanshien.

XX

IN the harbor at Ichang the British navy made ready to rescue their countrymen whose lives were at the mercy of a war-lord swollen with ill-got gain, brutalized by the killing of hundreds of his own countrymen. In order to surprise General Yang before he had taken the lives of his prisoners, a merchantman, the *Cathay,* was to be sent to the rescue. Only a few knew. They fitted her with boiler-plate around the bridge, with a pom-pom fore and aft, and a number of machine-guns. Rory O'Malley was to command her. Sailors brought from the British

gunboats were to man her, and captains, second officers, and engineers from the merchant ships volunteered for crew in order to lessen the Chinese aboard. No one knew which of the Chinese could be relied upon.

As they sat in conference on the ship, old Eben stalked into the saloon. Without salutation, he asked them: "Who's your pilot? What Chinaman can you be sure won't put your outfit on the rocks?"

O'Malley admitted they had been hard put to it to make a choice.

"That's my job," flashed Eben. "I know the gorges as none of you and few of the Chinese do. I'll take her up."

On the way up the river they repainted the *Cathay,* and O'Malley drilled his men in the plan of attack. Surprise the Chinese into submission and a bloodless victory if possible! The two ships to be locked quickly together with grappling hooks. Four parties to board the *Himalaya* through the fore and aft cargo doors, get on deck somehow, and stand off the Chinese while other sailors rushed for the cabins where O'Malley believed they would find the imprisoned officers.

"Surprise and swift action. That's our only chance," added O'Malley, and under his breath, "And may God help us." If they did not succeed in that, it was to be a hand-to-hand battle, muzzle to muzzle fighting—a page taken out of the warfare of the past.

XXI

AT six o'clock on a beautiful September evening, old Eben brought the *Cathay* around the bend at Wanshien. The once neat and orderly decks of the pirated merchantman were crowded with unkempt soldiers lounging about, some naked to their waist, their feet bare like the Chinese coolies that they were. Many were eating, leaning against the rails, their rice bowls in their hands, shoveling the food in with chop-sticks. Only the whites of their eyes showed above the rims of their bowls. They eyed the *Cathay* with stolid indifference as she drew quietly alongside.

Suddenly every Chinese on the deck disappeared. From the pirated ship came the *chitter-chatter* of machine guns. A rain of lead fell upon the deck of the *Cathay*. Three British sailors, dressed as civilians, sitting in deck chairs on the *Cathay* to give the effect of peace, slumped, as the dead do.

"They knew. Somebody betrayed us," groaned old Eben as he held his ship in place. Iron resounded upon iron, as the *Cathay's* crew bound the two ships together for the hand-to-hand struggle. A bugle blew. The boarding parties jumped across through the cargo doors into the hold of the *Himalaya.*

"Edge her up till she's fully abeam," commanded O'Malley as he put his pom-poms into action. Noise,

smoke, groans of the dying, as Chinese machine-guns and British pom-poms raked each other's ships. The sides of both ships ran red with blood. And the river between ran red.

Up through the companionways of the *Himalaya* to the main deck at last came the few in the searching party who were alive, working their way forward, obeying O'Malley's command to get to the cabins—hammering at the doors, smashing them in, hunting the imprisoned officers. Not there!

Old Eben, out from behind the plate, motioning, shouting to be heard above the turmoil. "On the bridge, the bridge, I tell ye. Skipper on the bridge! The bridge!" he screamed.

Yes, there the prisoners were, barricaded, defending themselves as best they could, waving a signal of distress.

"Swing your prow in," commanded O'Malley from where he stood, a few of his men around him. As the two bridges were brought together, with Chinese sniping from every side, O'Malley's men sought to get the captured officers across. One, two, three sailors fell, shot down just as they had their hands on the imprisoned men. The captain got across, but not young Eben. Then old Eben's long arm reached out and drew his son to safety.

His son's voice beside him. "Father! Look! They've shot the chief engineer." They saw the man reel, then fall backward out of sight behind the barricades. Young Eben grabbed a rifle from a fallen sailor. Out beyond the sandbags he stood, throwing

the bolt back, pulling the trigger on the empty rifle. *Click-clack, click-clack.*

Above the racket O'Malley shouted, "Have to take her, men, to get our wounded." With a pistol in each hand he leaped the grazing rails of the two ships. He fired two shots, then he fell, riddled by bullets. The Chinese rushed upon him. "Good God," quavered old Eben, "they've cut his throat."

"Beat 'em back, beat 'em back," cried some one. "Look, look, they're rushing the cargo doors."

A sailor hurried by. "Shells. We haven't any more shells."

"Head downstream," commanded the boyish voice of the new commanding officer. Under old Eben's hand, the *Cathay* turned and dropped out of the range of the remaining guns. Careful now. The accustomed signals to the engine-room, the quick response of the engines steadied old Eben's nerves. There was the sun going down behind the hills of Wanshien as he had seen it so many times.

Eight bells, eight o'clock. They dropped anchor. All night long old Eben and young Eben sat on the deck of the *Cathay*. So did all the rest. No one ate, no one slept. The wounded were soon cared for. Most had been left on the pirated ship which they had not taken, even with the offering of Rory O'Malley's life. Old Eben dared not think what had happened to them. Resolutely he kept his mind from that ghastly scene of O'Malley's death. He tried to think of Quita at home, and his grandson not yet born.

"Oh, Hawley," some one said to young Eben,

"lend a hand here, won't you? You know about the engines. Chinese engineer down there has stayed at his duty twenty hours now and the temperature at a hundred and twenty. He's all in, shaking like a leaf and bursting into tears every time any one speaks to him."

"Sure," said young Eben.

In a dream old Eben heard them. Always the same throughout the years. Always a few faithful Chinese, who in times like these risked their lives for their friend, the white man.

XXII

AT dawn old Eben took the wheel, nosing her round, pointing her down-river. Never again should he stand at a pilot's wheel. Last time he would see the black cliffs, last time follow through the tongue of the rapid. Something prophetic within him told him so. The unprecedented high water of that summer was running out; his strength running out with it.

Down the river they went, twenty-five knots an hour, away from this charnel house. The soft September day lay over the country so beautiful. But hurry; everybody wanted to get away from this ship that hemmed them in to the memory of yesterday. So many had gone to the rescue, so few returning. Well, he was bringing young Eben back to Quita.

The familiar sights of Ichang, the tall house, his

house. Margaret at the window, leaning far out, bravely smiling. Oh, no, it was Quita. Of course, Quita.

Silently they went up the stone steps of the bunding. Masses of yellow inexpressive faces filling the Bund as far back as they could see; in front a handful of white people to greet them. O'Malley's wife was in England, but the wife of the chief engineer stood there looking, seeing not her man. As he passed, old Eben noticed her, young and broken. So might Quita have looked, had he not brought young Eben back.

On into the shadow of the godown, across the compound, up the long stairs in the tall house overlooking the river, going on into the sanctuary of his own room, Margaret's room. Closing the door behind him, leaving young Eben and Quita out there in the hall to each other's embraces, Quita's little whimpering cries smothered on young Eben's shoulder, young Eben's choking laugh. Forgetting him, old and lonely, shorn now of his dreams, his success. He sank upon the bed, lying diagonally so as to stretch out his long heavy limbs. Darkness flowed over him.

XXIII

A LONG while afterward, coming back to consciousness, depression dragging at his senses, the feel of the pilot's wheel in the hollow of his hand.

Somewhere a door opened and he heard a thin wail. Long ago one night he had heard it when Eben was born. Commotion down the passageway. Two men's voices, one his son's, going down the stairs. The front door far below closing. Some one running back, but the steps did not stop at his door. No one came to tell him. Was it a son?

Six o'clock. For how many years at six o'clock Fu had brought him his morning tea. Ah, here he came, softly turning the door-knob.

"Come in," growled Captain Eben Hawley. "Don't act like a thief."

With assurance old Fu came forward, a smile breaking up the wrinkled mask of his features. "Think Master plenty tired. P'laps sleep."

Old Eben waited. Fu, with his grin broadening, set down the tea. "Missie have catchee small master. Plenty fine, small master." The two old men smiled at each other.

"Why didn't ye tell me before?" demanded Captain Hawley.

XXIV

IT was November. The common people, the deep silent stream of the people, themselves stirred by militarism. Not alone soldiers; laborers now, farmers.

Arm yourselves, laborers! Strike! Kill the gentry. Demand your rights. Kill your landlords. Up, farm-

ers! Take the fields for your own. Produce rice only for yourselves. Strike! Destroy! Kill!

The new pattern of nationalism taking shape, hurled aside. The people at last unified in violence. Great slogans, a great cause. Away with the white man. Away with the gentry. Away with the capitalist. *Da! da!*

The red ichor of hate staining the fabric of life.

The godowns, the offices, the houses of the white people, except old Eben's, were closed, the white men gone away, fleeing again before the violence of this other race.

But old Eben could not go. He lay dying in the chamber that overlooked the river.

Below in the harbor the steamers huddled together, uncared for, guarded by pickets, no longer like the mettlesome steeds of his fancy. Occasionally a boat came down from that land beyond the barrier of the mountains, not to return, carrying refugees—missionaries, doctors—the last of the little community of Chungking.

Junks, as for two thousand years, started up-river, but their numbers were few. The junkmen and the trackers, even as Archibald Little had prophesied, absorbed into the business of the steamer's easier labor, shorter hours. And now the province of Szechuan was shut away more completely than it had been for centuries. The river became more barren of craft each day.

Up from the street came the shuffling sound of men marching, marching in soft-soled shoes, in bare

feet; the laborers, the peasants, the students—marching, marching, singing their songs of freedom, shouting their rallying cries. Ceaselessly through the city, day after day, they marched with their soft shuffling steps. Like a river flowing on and on.

As young Eben or Quita left old Eben's bedside to stare down on the crowd, it looked indeed like a tumultuous river, rising high under the jut of the roofs where men and women walked, flowing away into shallows and low places where the small children walked, flowing slowly there, too, for their childish feet often lagged. But for the most, the river flowed bravely, and riding upon it, not ships and junks, but banners, red banners, bobbing along on the current. And the banners, like the shouting, called to the great mass of down-trodden humanity to rise, kill the white man, bring back prosperity to the country. But the river was not in flood yet. Quita, standing there at the window, knew. There was still time to get away. That chanting song, however terrifying, did not yet signify the extreme violence.

XXV

IT was quiet in the room where young Eben had been born and Margaret had died. Old Eben lay, a figure of wax, under the sheet, his white hair, like a crest, standing away from the pillow. In death, his features had taken on profound dignity, the defeat of those last months gone—defeated.

Faintly through the window came now and then the sound of an anchor chain going down as a junk made the harbor, and from somewhere far down in the depths of the house the plaintive wail of Chinese voices mourning the dead. *"Ai! Ai!* He is dead."

All through the night Fu Ling Ting and the *amah* mourned their master.

XXVI

IN a corner of the compound the house coolie worked, digging a grave. The pickets and bands of students had refused old Eben other burial. His body must be put away meanly and in utmost haste. For the cries had taken on a new sharpness to-day, and Quita was already busy getting a few things together against their departure. Under cover of darkness they must get down to the gunboats.

Fu would not go, not even for the new young master whom he had so many years awaited. He would stay here, a faithful old man guarding the grave of his master, that it be not desecrated.

There was a knock at the larger entrance gate of the compound, not used for days now. Fu peeped through a knot-hole. He saw a little crowd standing there without banners, without the staff of the picket. *"Kai men. Kai men.* Open the gate. Open the gate," they cried. "We are friends."

The fishmonger from the corner, the sweet-meat vendor from whom young Eben and Quita had bought sweets when they were children, others, filed in as Fu Ling drew back the iron bar. "We have been to the authorities, the pickets, and we have told them it cannot be. In this Street of Perpetual Happiness, for many, many moons The Tiger has walked among us. Sometimes quietly; sometimes with hot breath. He must have proper burial. We have arranged all. But they grant you only this afternoon. You must hurry."

At four, coolies from the Street of Perpetual Happiness raised upon their shoulders the mammoth red carrying poles, suspended from which was the red varnished coffin containing the mortal remains of Eben Hawley, and moved out of the main gate of the compound. In the cubicles along the way, there was no sign of activity. All had stopped their work, and no procession flowed into the street. The Great Tiger was to be buried.

Young Eben walked close to the coffin. Fu, a bowed old man, followed a few paces behind, as befitting servant to master. Ah! What loss of face, but it was *"mei yu fatsu."* It could not be helped. Master, who had been a great man in this city, followed by two mourners, one of them but a servant. The meanest coolie would have a burial equal to this. Master should have been buried with pomp and ceremony. There was nothing, nothing to attend him in the other world. Fu Ling saw his master wandering through the years of eternity without the things

to give him plenty big face. If only they could have had the funeral properly, with enough paper money to make him rich in the other world. Paper money and paper servants burned for his use in the other world. What would master do without a servant? For over thirty years now he, Fu Ling Ting, had cared for him. But these outside people never learned. Paper flowers! Missie had put them in his coffin. What would Master do with flowers?

They went on down the street, through the city, unmolested, to the white man's cemetery and laid old Eben beside Margaret.

Quickly young Eben turned and hurried back over the way he had come. There was no time to lose, if he was to get his wife and son away before the angry mobs gathered once more around the house. Already in the distance could be heard their chant: *da! da!* kill! kill! It had taken on a new sharpness.

Fu Ling paced behind his new master. With some satisfaction he thought how he had managed, in part, to set things right for old Master. Under those flowers of the young missie's, close to Master's hand, he had placed a tiny paper steamer. Perfect it was. Every smoke-stack just like master's boat *Tumultuous Waters,* of which he had been so proud.